

SECRET SERVICE

OLD AND YOUNG KING BRADY, DETECTIVES.

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No. 333.

NEW YORK, JUNE 9, 1905.

Price 5 Cents.

THE BRADYS AND THE JOPLIN JAYS; OR, THREE "BADMEN" FROM MISSOURI.

By A NEW YORK DETECTIVE.



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THE BRADYS AND THE JOPLIN JAYS

OR,

Three "Badmen" from Missouri.

BY A NEW YORK DETECTIVE.

CHAPTER I.

THE BRADYS' FIVE CASES.

On a certain hot morning in June, some few years since, the Bradys, those most noted detectives, found themselves with more calls for their services than they knew what to do with.

Upon reaching the little office on Park Row, New York, that morning after an absence of several days, the detectives found an unusually large mail.

Both went to work at it, and after weeding out the crank letters, of which they always have quite a number, and the business letters relating to matters of the past or already in hand, there still remained five calls on new cases.

To respond to all was manifestly impossible.

Only on rare occasions do the Bradys call in outside assistance; it was, therefore, a case of accept or reject.

The five calls were as follows:

1. C. H. Rollingham, of the Wickham Lead Company, Joplin, Mo., wished to see the detectives at once at his Wall street office.

2. Col. J. H. Yellowlee desired the Bradys to call at the Fifth Avenue Hotel as soon as possible, as he wished to consult them regarding a case.

3. The town of Ludington, Colo., wished to engage the Bradys to put down a gang of outlaws known as the "Alkali Skinners."

4. Burlingham & Co., of Boston, desired the detectives to leave for the Bean City at once to aid them in finding a defaulting cashier.

5. A call from one Bodd Prouty, an ill-spelled, mysterious scrawl of which the detectives could make nothing at first glance.

Now, any ordinary detective would have made short work of his choice here.

The Wall street call would have had the preference on the ground of promising the best returns.

Old King Brady, however, is strictly impartial.

Money cuts very little figure in his operations, for, as is well known, the old detective is himself very rich.

"Which do we take, Governor?" asked Young King Brady, as the old detective's partner and pupil is usually called.

"Mark out No. 3," said Old King Brady.

"Well! So you don't care to go on a badman hunt this week?"

"No. We will give that a rest for the present."

"And I had better mark out No. 5, too, I suppose?"

"No."

"But it amounts to nothing. I can't make it out at all."

"So much the more interesting. Now, make four slips of paper, marking them 1—2—4—5, shake them up in your hat and draw one out."

"Your old way of deciding."

"And as good as any other. Shake them up, Harry. We want to get to work."

Young King Brady doing as directed drew No. 5 from the hat.

"Confound the luck!" he exclaimed. "I believe the fellow who wrote that letter is crazy. I should have pitched it in the waste-basket if it had been me."

"Let's see it again," replied Old King Brady. "Perhaps we can make something out of it. What's this he says?"

And Old King Brady read as follows:

Deer Sur i heard tell of you throo my friend judge izard of arkansas, he says to me old king brady is a slick card i am in trubble but i have got the dough want some of it then help me this is no fule bizness our kause is jest and the site will pervale if you want to ketch on to a good

thing meet me at the stachion claremont Noo jersie too-morrer night at nine there wont be nobuddy there only me and i am yours trooly

BODD PROUTY.

p s say the password is joplin and by this sign you will konker. B. P.

"About as blind a letter as we ever tackled," remarked Harry, as he lit a cigar.

"What do you make out of it? Clews and points," asked Old King Brady, tossing the letter over to his partner.

Harry studied it a long while.

"It reads to me like the letter of a come-on for green-goods," he said at last.

"Good guess," replied Old King Brady. "I think so, too."

"Of course he is from Joplin, Mo."

"Bad guess. Joplin used to be a jay town, but is so no longer. This particular jay evidently has some reason for using the name; he may belong in Joplin, but I doubt it. Anything else?"

"Well, the letter bears no date, but the postmark is three days old."

"Exactly, and that puts us out of the appointment."

"And should spoil the call."

"It would if I had not made up my mind to trust to luck and answer the call, late as it is."

"You seem singularly stuck on the letter, Governor."

"No; only curious."

"And you actually mean to throw over the Wall street call for this?"

"I have not said so. Call up this man Rollingham on the 'phone and ask him what he wants. I have a strong impression that there is nothing in it."

"And the Boston call?"

"I won't answer it."

"And Colonel Yellowlee?"

"I don't like his name. I think he is a fakir."

Harry laughed heartily.

"Governor, you do take the strangest notions," he said. "How can the poor man help his name?"

"He can't, I suppose, but with such a name as that he should get it changed at once."

Harry laughed again and did the telephoning.

It was brief.

Mr. Rollingham declined to come to the 'phone.

A clerk informed Harry that, not hearing from the Bradys, another detective had been engaged.

"What did I tell you?" exclaimed Old King Brady. "Nothing in it, you see."

"I see you were right. We are now reduced to Colonel Yellowlee and our Joplin jay."

"The jay has already won. Still, we will investigate the colonel. Call up the Fifth Avenue Hotel."

Harry obeyed.

The result was quite as unsatisfactory as in the case of Mr. Rollingham.

At first Harry was told that no such man was staying at the hotel.

Then before he could ring off he got the word to wait, and in a minute he was informed that a man calling himself Colonel Yellowlee had been receiving letters addressed to the care of the hotel, but he was only a transient diner there and had not been seen in several days.

"Exactly," exclaimed Old King Brady. "So you see I was right, or rather the note was. If we wish to remain in town, and I do, the Joplin jay is our only case."

"And you are going out to Claremont to-night?"

"As I feel now, yes."

"Where is it?"

"On the New Jersey Central railroad. A little flag station just beyond Communipaw."

"Oh, in Jersey City?"

"Yes."

"The present holdout for come-ons."

"Yes, and Claremont is the place where they have been meeting the handshaker of late, as you would know if you had watched the papers."

"I plead guilty. I did not know."

"All right. We will go out there to-night."

"And have our labor for our pains."

"Very likely," replied Old King Brady, carelessly.

And it was so.

At nine o'clock that evening the Bradys turned up at Claremont.

Considering the fact that this insignificant station is within the limits of Jersey City, it is remarkable in its way.

Not a house stands near it.

To the north the lights on Jersey City Heights can be seen.

To the south are the big tanks of the Standard Oil Company. On the side of the hill and in the marsh which stretches away from the railroad are one or two old-fashioned farmhouses in which those who work in the big oil yard live.

At Claremont there is not even a station agent except at train time. After six o'clock the station is closed.

The Bradys waited around for half an hour and then gave it up.

Next morning the papers announced the mysterious disappearance of Mr. C. H. Rollingham.

Evidently this was one of the Bradys' correspondents.

The man, it seemed, was the vice-president of the Wickham Lead Mining Company, Joplin, Mo.

He had, it appeared, left his office at four o'clock the afternoon previous to keep an appointment in Jersey City.

As Mr. Rollingham failed to put in an appearance at his home, his wife had gone to the police station and a general alarm had been sent out.

It was only an item in the papers, none of which seemed to take the matter seriously.

Indeed one paper said that Mr. Rollingham would probably "come rolling home" in a day or two.

But Old King Brady was inclined to view the matter in a very different light.

"Look here, Harry," he said, calling his partner's attention to the item, "this is indeed strange. Our jay gave us the password Joplin. Mr. Rollingham's lead mine is at or near Joplin. Mark what I tell you, it will turn out that there is a connection between these two calls."

Harry did not attempt to dispute with his partner, for on too many previous occasions Old King Brady's guesses have hit the mark.

Old King Brady went up to police headquarters that morning and made particular inquiries about the recent doings of the greengoods men.

He could, however, learn of nothing which led him to believe that any jay from Joplin had lately fallen into the clutches of these crooks.

And now, as the detectives were anxious to be at work, Harry was despatched to Boston to see if there was still time to take up the case of the bank defaulter.

Late that afternoon while Old King Brady sat in the office alone, a tall, gentlemanly-looking person, dressed like a man of means, entered and introduced himself as Mr. Smith, coming from "Colonel Yellowlee."

Old King Brady viewed him with suspicion from the start.

Still he could not identify his face as that of any well-known crook, and the old detective carries the rogues' gallery in his head.

"I inquired at the Fifth Avenue Hotel for Colonel Yellowlee," he said, "but I could learn nothing of him. Who is the gentleman? What does he wish with me?"

"First and foremost to find out if you are too busy to undertake a case for him?" inquired Mr. Smith, dropping into a chair.

"It depends entirely upon the nature of the case."

"Mysterious disappearance."

"In town?"

"Yes."

"Man or woman?"

"Neither. A young girl."

"Be more definite, sir. We are not making headway."

"Well, that is what I can't be. Colonel Yellowlee will tell his own story. He is a rich Southern gentleman. He is stopping with his brother uptown. He does not make headquarters at the Fifth Avenue; merely gets his mail there. If you had answered the letter it would have reached him."

"I was away when it came. I can meet the colonel now."

"Where?"

"Here at his brother's house or at the hotel."

"Better make it the hotel. The fact is, the colonel is away to-day. I expect him back to-night. He asked me to call."

"You are personally interested in the case?"

"No; only to oblige my friend Yellowlee."

"Then you can tell me nothing about this girl or the circumstances attending her disappearance?"

"I could, but I would rather not. It isn't my business, and I had just as soon that Yellowlee told you his own story. Be at the Fifth Avenue at twelve o'clock and I will try to have him there."

"All right," said Old King Brady. "I will not promise to accept the commission, but I have no objection to meeting Colonel Yellowlee. I will be on hand."

"Do you want any retainer or anything?" demanded Mr. Smith, pulling out a roll of bills.

"That comes later," replied Old King Brady, and his visitor withdrew.

He had scarcely gone when the postman looked in.

"Oh! you are still here, Mr. Brady!" he exclaimed. "It is not often that I catch you here on the last delivery. Here are a couple of letters for you."

Old King Brady opened his letters and read them with surprise.

"Heavens! This is strange!" he muttered. "Here are these vanishing cases all coming back again."

One letter was written on C. H. Rollingham's paper, requesting the Bradys to call first thing next morning.

It was signed "Wickham Lead Co., per H. Wickham, Prest."

The other was from Mr. Bodd Prouty, the "Joplin Jay," and read as follows:

"Mister brady sur you didn't come this is bizness i want your advice and i kin pay fer it i spose you are out for the stuff same as enebody else and i've got it i will be there to-morrer night nine p m i mean bizness i am prepared to pay ez hi as twenty dollars for your skillful advice so come pleas tew.

BODD PROUTY.

Say, dont forget the word its joplin.

CHAPTER II.

A STRANGE MIDNIGHT ADVENTURE.

Old King Brady was now becoming intensely interested in the singular outcome of the bunch of letters found in his office that June morning.

At first fading away to nothing, three of the cases seemed now to have suddenly been galvanized into life again.

Satisfied that there must be some connection between the Rollingham matter and the case of the "Joplin Jay," the old detective almost wished that he had not taken up with Colonel Yellowlee's representative.

But this had been done and it was too late to regret it now, for Old King Brady is a man who never goes back on his word.

So dismissing the other matters from his mind, the detective turned up at midnight at the Fifth Avenue Hotel.

He found Mr. Smith on the sidewalk pacing up and down.

This alone was suspicious.

Indeed, Old King Brady had suspected the man from the first, but, truth told, he did not suspect that matters were going to take the turn they did.

"Oh, good-evening!" exclaimed Mr. Smith, looking up at the big clock. "You are right on time, I see. It is so beastly hot that I thought I would stand out here where I could get all the air going and be ready for you when you came."

"Has the colonel returned?" asked Old King Brady.

"I understand that he has," was the reply.

"Then you have not seen him?"

"No."

"Well?"

"Are you ready?"

"Why, of course I am ready; otherwise I should not be here. Have we far to go?"

"Only a few steps; around on Twenty-seventh street."

"Well, then, let us be going, for it is getting late."

"Will you join me in a drink first, Mr. Brady?"

"No drink when I am out on business."

"Have a cigar?"

"Try one of mine."

Mr. Smith did so.

Old King Brady, who was watching him narrowly, thought that he did not look over well pleased with the rejection of his proposal.

They then walked up Broadway and turned into Twenty-seventh street, going west.

Just before they reached Sixth avenue Mr. Smith turned in at a doorway alongside an art store.

"This way, Mr. Brady," he said.

The store was fairly respectable, as the detective knew.

On the floor above was an art school and above that were artists' studios.

Old King Brady followed his conductor unhesitatingly, and yet right there the detective, shrewd as he was, made his mistake.

The neighborhood was a decidedly shady one, filled with dangerous characters of all kinds.

And yet there are many respectable persons who live a Bohemian life in these side streets.

Old King Brady followed Mr. Smith to the floor above.

"Are we going to the art studios upstairs?" he asked.

"We are," was the reply. "Follow me."

They passed on to the foot of the second stairs.

Then all in an instant the flickering gaslight behind them was extinguished.

But not before Old King Brady had seen a man rise up from the stairs.

The detective made a move to draw his revolver, but his hand was struck down.

At the same instant the man on the stairs planted a revolver against his forehead.

There was a shuffle of feet in the darkness and the old detective was seized right and left.

"Mr. Brady, resistance is useless," spoke a strange

voice. "Let me tell you that we do not intend to do you the slightest harm unless you force us to it by your own action; furthermore, you shall be well paid for all you do."

"Gentlemen, I do not relish such jobs," replied the old detective, steadily. "I advise you to unhand me and let me go my way."

"That is impossible," replied the voice. "Your services are needed, particularly in the line of advice. If you refuse to accompany us I will not answer for the consequences. If you go quietly and make no trouble, as I said before, you will be well paid."

"But what will be the outcome? Am I to be detained?"

"Not over an hour if you do as we say."

"I am in your power, gentlemen."

"Absolutely. If you call for help we shall leave you, but——"

"Well?"

"Help may come too late."

"Gentlemen, these are hard lines."

"Mr. Brady, you make too much of it. Do as we request and I swear that no harm shall come to you."

"Have you no guarantee? Who is it that wants me, is it anyone I know?"

"It is."

"His name?"

"I cannot speak it. You will recognize him instantly when you see him. Come, old man, decide quick. Go quietly with us and you will have no reason to regret it; refuse and we shall do you up on the spot."

"I will go."

"Good! We shall have to blindfold you. It is necessary that you should not see us."

"Very well. Is your man in this building?"

"He is not."

"All right. Go ahead with your work."

"We begin by removing your revolver, which will be returned to you," said the voice, and the weapon was taken from the old detective's pocket.

A cloth was then tied tightly over his eyes and he was led downstairs.

They crossed the sidewalk and Old King Brady was thrust into a cab.

A drive of several blocks followed, and the cab made many turns.

At last it pulled up, and the detective was led across the sidewalk through a door and up a flight of stairs.

Now, although blindfolded, Old King Brady was by no means so entirely blind to what was going on.

Long experience has taught Old King Brady much.

During his experience that night here are some of the things he observed.

We start with the time of his capture.

The first thing Old King Brady did when he was set upon in the dark was to grab the newel of the banister with his right hand.

On that occasion he noticed that the ornament was slightly broken.

Next, in descending the stairs, Old King Brady counted the steps; there were eighteen.

There were five paces from the sill of the door to the cab.

In a house on the opposite side of Twenty-seventh street there was a woman singing.

She appeared to be practicing opera music, and the air was one which Old King Brady recognized as a famous contralto aria from the "Barber of Seville."

Now mark the result of this close observation.

When Old King Brady left the cab there was a woman's voice to be heard singing the same aria from the "Barber of Seville."

When he crossed the sidewalk to the doorway he counted five paces.

When he ascended the stairs he counted eighteen steps.

Putting out his hand in the upper hall, Old King Brady got hold of the banisters and guided himself along till he got a grasp upon the newel of the second flight.

It was just as he expected.

There was the broken ornament.

"A put-up job," thought the old detective. "That cab ride was a mere farce. We are back at the same building again."

And this was certain.

When it comes to work of this kind Old King Brady never errs.

The detective was now led up two flights further and taken to the end of the hall, there passing through a door.

It instantly closed behind him and he heard the key turn in the lock.

"You can take off the blind now, Mr. Brady," a voice said.

Old King Brady removed the cloth to find himself standing alone in a handsomely furnished room.

As he had expected, it was fitted up as an artist's studio, but there was a bed in one corner, which showed that it was used as a living-room as well.

The old detective laid the bandage down upon a table and stood still.

"Sit down!" called a voice from behind an expensive Japanese screen.

"I prefer to stand," replied the detective, and the following conversation ensued:

"You will sit down or it will lead to trouble. You must obey me implicitly. Those are the terms."

Old King Brady dropped into the chair.

"Don't you intend to show yourself like a man?" he called out.

"I do not," answered the voice. "You must talk with me as we are talking now. Make no attempt to move or—well, you understand."

"Go on, let us bring this farce to an end."

"You may consider it a farce, but it is liable to turn into a tragedy."

"Go on!"

"I am about to state a case on which I want your advice;

if you are willing to give me your help, then so much the better, but first let me ask you a question which, I trust, you will answer truly; if you do not I promise you that before many hours have passed I shall be made aware of that fact and that you will surely be done up."

"Spare me your threats. You merely waste time. You probably know me, and if so you know just what sort of a man I am, one who will not lie to you and who cannot be driven by that sort of talk."

"Right!" said the voice. "Now answer me. Have you been called on a case by the Wickham Lead Company, whose office is at No. — Wall street?"

Here it was again. Instead of two cases being joined, here were three.

"I have," replied Old King Brady, assuming a quiet tone, which he did not vary through this singular interview.

"Once or twice?"

"Twice."

"And the second call was signed by a man named Wickham?"

"Yes."

"Have you answered either of these calls?"

"Not in person."

"Through your partner?"

"My partner telephoned in answer to the first call, but our services were declined."

"Very well. Now, Mr. Brady, you will also decline the second call or expect trouble."

"Proceed."

"I shall exact no promise from you and I make no further threats. I merely warn you."

"Go on."

"Now for your advice. Know that I am acting for a gang of greengoods men."

"As I supposed."

"No comments, please. Listen."

"Go on."

"These men are working with three who hail from a rural community near Joplin, Mo. We will style them the come-ons, as usual."

"Why not style them the Joplin Jays?"

"I accept the suggestion. These greengoods men got into correspondence with these Joplin Jays in the usual way. I need not go into details as to how it was done?"

"If it was the usual way there is surely no need."

"Very good. They were to come on and our man was to meet them at Claremont station on the New Jersey Central road one night last week."

"Your handshaker?"

"Yes. He went to meet them. They were supposed to bring on the unusually large sum of fifty thousand dollars; naturally we were very much interested in the outcome."

"Naturally. Such a haul does not turn up every day."

"It did not turn up our way this time. It is possible that our handshaker has turned us down; at all events, since the night he went to meet these Joplin Jays he has not been seen."

"Ha! Vanished, eh?"

"As completely as if he had dropped off the planet."

"Where was the meeting-place?"

"Claremont, New Jersey."

"Well?"

"We want you to take the case up and find this man; to learn if the jays actually came, if they saw him, what happened—in short, all. Five hundred in good cash has gone with the handshaker, and we are feeling sore."

"Exactly. Is that all?"

"Yes."

"The name of this handshaker."

"Must I give it?"

"How can I work without it?"

"Well, you know the man."

"I shall not arrest him unless you so order?"

"We want you to arrest him and bring him here."

"Where is here?"

"You will be informed when you get him. Can't you lock him up in your house in Washington Square first?"

"I suppose I can."

"Do it."

"I shall do nothing unless you give me the name."

"Do you want to take up the case?"

"I don't object. What will be the pay?"

"Half if you get the dough."

"Ah! And if I don't?"

"We guarantee two hundred and expenses for the man."

"And the Joplin Jays?"

"You must locate them. We ask no more at present."

"I accept the case on conditions."

"Well?"

"Answer my questions?"

"Well?"

"You have another motive."

"I admit it."

"Are you telling that motive?"

"Certainly not."

"I will take the case without further talk, but I must know that name."

"You swear to deliver the man to us if you get him?"

"Yes."

"He is Harry Ryerson."

"Oh!"

"You know him, of course?"

"Perfectly well. What is his address?"

"It would do you no good if I told you. He has not been seen there in a week."

"You have looked over the opium joints?"

"He has not been seen in the joints."

"Have you any further information to give me?"

"None."

"How am I to get at you?"

"The man who brought you here will attend to that if you write to Colonel Yellowlee, Station D, New York."

"Ah! Not the Fifth Avenue Hotel."

"We propose to drop the hotel for awhile."

"Very well. And that is all?"

"That is all."

"I don't think it is."

"What do you mean?"

"Naturally I don't want to spend my time for nothing."

"Ha! You want a retainer?"

"Certainly."

"How much?"

"A hundred."

"You hit me hard."

"If you succeed in locating these Joplin Jays through me you expect to make big money out of this?"

"That's right."

"Then I must have a retainer as a guarantee of your sincerity."

"I'll give you fifty. It is all I have with me."

"Very well. No greengoods go."

"Hardly with you. Here comes the roll."

The money was tossed over the top of the screen and Old King Brady pocketed it.

At the same instant the gas was shut off, and then in the darkness several men gathered about the old detective again.

He was blindfolded, led down to the cab and driven away.

After many turns the blinds was removed and Old King Brady found himself with "Mr. Smith" in front of the Fifth Avenue Hotel.

"We have worked this little racket out all right," said the man. "Here's your revolver. Now let me give you a word of advice, Mr. Brady. Don't try to double on us. This is no ordinary case. It will pay you to do as you are told."

"Good-night," replied Old King Brady.

He flung open the door of the cab and hurried away.

CHAPTER III.

HARRY TAKES HOLD ON THE TRIPLE CASE.

Harry came back from Boston next morning, reporting nothing in the bank defalcation case.

The defaulter had given himself up and thus the matter was ended so far as the Bradys were concerned.

It was with intense interest that Young King Brady listened to his partner's strange story.

"Who could the man have been?" he exclaimed.

"Probably Jack Daggett," replied Old King Brady.

"Did you recognize his voice?"

"I can't say that I did. I decide so for two reasons. In the first place Jack is now at large, having recently been discharged from Sing Sing, as I happen to know. In the next place, he knows that I would recognize him and, so I judge, thought it better to keep himself concealed."

"Very likely you are right. What do you propose to do?"

"Push the matter for all it is worth, but it is absolutely necessary to hear what this man Wickham has to say first, and to learn if C. H. Rollingham, whose disappearance was reported in the papers, has turned up."

"But will it be safe to strike in at the mining office after the warning you had?"

"Decidedly not."

"Suppose I go?"

"Look here, Harry, this is serious. You don't catch on. Suppose this call from Wickham is only a trap?"

"Ha! I catch your meaning now. To see if we obey orders?"

"Exactly."

"But can these greengoods men be in with a big mining concern?"

"Is it a big concern? I never heard of it."

"I looked it up in Boston, finding myself with spare time on my hands."

"Well?"

"They are mining a good deal of ore, although they have not been at it long. The prospects of the mine are exceptionally brilliant, and everyone connected with it is likely to make a fortune if they can settle a quarrel among the stockholders now in progress."

"Ha! They are quarreling, eh?"

"Yes."

"Then that is a clew in itself. Did you learn the nature of the quarrel?"

"No."

"It is easily ascertained. Now, telephone this man Wickham, ask him what he wants with us. Don't say that I am here."

Then over the 'phone Harry held the following conversation after getting some person who announced himself as Mr. Wickham at the other end:

"You say you are Young King Brady?"

"Yes, sir."

"It is Old King Brady I wish to talk with."

"He is attending to a case just at present."

"Is he out of town?"

"I believe not, but he is going out of town. What is it you want?"

"One Mr. Rollingham has disappeared, probably you saw it mentioned in the papers?"

"Yes. Hasn't he turned up yet?"

"Not yet. We are most anxious to find him. It is of the utmost importance that he should be found at once. If you can't take up the matter we must look elsewhere for help."

"We were told the other day that you had engaged a detective."

"That was on another matter."

"What matter?"

"I can't explain these things over the 'phone, young man. If your partner can't call on me cannot you come here?"

"Hold the wire a minute."

"What shall I say?" asked Harry, moving back.

"Tell him that you will send him a good detective; that he will call at one o'clock to-day, and that his name is O. Ferret."

"Right."

Harry then delivered the message.

The man at the other end seemed to be immensely disappointed.

He pressed Harry closely to know why the Bradys could not take up the case.

Of course he got no satisfaction.

At last he consented to talk with O. Ferret and then rang off.

"Is it you or me?" asked Young King Brady then.

"It will be you," was the reply. "You must disguise with the greatest care. As an eccentric, I should say. Mind your eye, now, for this is a case which requires all your skill."

"I should say it was! This seems to be a double-ender."

"A triple-ender. It begins differently from any case I ever undertook."

"It can't be that Rollingham is Harry Ryerson?"

"I should greatly doubt it."

"But it is possible."

"Certainly possible."

"This is a much mixed affair. I can see no light anywhere."

"Nor I, except that in the background of all this business these Joplin Jays shine out bright and clear."

"Not so clear, Governor. They don't appear to be ordinary come-ons, by any means."

"And that's right, too. But I must be going. Now look out for yourself and don't make a mess of it, for much may depend upon what you hear from these lead mining people."

Old King Brady then left the office to attend to a private matter upon which he was then engaged.

At the appointed time Harry turned up at the Wall street office of the Wickham Lead Company.

He found the rooms furnished in the latest and most expensive office fashion, but there were only two clerks at work behind the expensive brass railing.

These young men eyed Young King Brady curiously, as well as they might, for he was made up in such fashion that he might readily have been mistaken for a Joplin Jay himself.

"My name is Ferret," said Young King Brady. "I have an appointment with Mr. Wickham. Can I see him now?"

"I think you can," was the reply, and Harry was ushered into the presence of a sleek, balmy gentleman, who looked him over in a disgusted way.

"I am greatly disappointed not to have been able to see one of the Bradys," he said; "is it really impossible for them to call on me?"

"That's what Mr. Brady told me," Harry replied.

"And why?"

"They are working on a case."

"You have done work for them before?"

"Lots of it."

"Are you regularly employed by them?"

"No."

"Where is your office?"

"Haven't any. I make my headquarters with the Bradys. A letter addressed to their care will always reach me."

"I don't know what to do," said Mr. Wickham, in an uncertain way. "The police are working on this business, but they have nothing to guide them, and I could give them a clew if I chose, but I don't. I don't want their interference. I prefer to work on the outside."

"You will have to please yourself," said Harry. "If you give me the particulars perhaps I can induce Mr. Brady to take up the case after all."

"Try," said Wickham. "I mean no disrespect to you, young man, but if what I have to tell should get out it might lead to a great deal of trouble."

"Whatever you tell me will never get out," replied Harry, emphatically.

"Well, I've got to do something. I suppose I shall have to trust you."

"Don't, if you don't want to."

"I am going to. Now listen. Oh, by the way, of course you will report to Mr. Brady and get his advice."

"Certainly."

"Well, then, here goes. Our Mr. Rollingham left this office on the day of his disappearance to keep an appointment in Jersey City and has not been seen since. So much the police know. I have for reasons falsely stated that I do not know who that appointment was with or where the place was. I am now going to tell you both, but it must be in strict confidence."

"It shall be."

"Very well. Rollingham and I are Eastern managers of the lead company which bears my name. We are doing a large business, and for certain reasons it is absolutely necessary that Rollingham should be here by the day after to-morrow. If he is not here it may lead to our losing the control of the company."

"I see."

"I shall go no further on that line. Now for my clew. Read this letter, please."

At a glance Harry saw that it was in the same handwriting as the letters the Bradys had received from Mr. Bodd Prouty, their "Joplin Jay."

It read as follows:

"rollingham you old thief we are in town beware we hold toms proxys you no what that means if you want to make terms now is your time at six o'clock on tuesday night we shall stand in front of the gate of the pennsyvany ferry jersey city better be there mebbe you wont know us but we shall know you and we will speak.

"BODD PROUTY,

"COL. TOM FISHLAKE,

"PETE BUTTS."

"Well," said Harry, "did he go?"

"He did not," replied Wickham. "These men are desperate characters. He wrote for Old King Brady, intending to ask him to go with him; failing in that, Mr. Rollingham let the matter drop, and then came this letter a day later."

The second letter read thus:

"rollingham you didnt kum you coward very good when the election kums we will kum then good day to you now this is your last chance kum to the same place four o'clock to morrow and make terms we mean bizness.

"BODD PROUTY."

"And he went?" asked Harry.

"Yes, and has not been seen since," replied Mr. Wickham.

"I see, and this company meeting takes place day after to-morrow."

"I have nothing to say about that part of the business. All I want is to have you find Mr. Rollingham, for I have no doubt he is detained somewhere; indeed, for all I know he may have been made way with. As I told you before, these are desperate men."

"Very well. I'll see what I can do."

"One thing further, the reward will be a large one if you succeed in finding Mr. Rollingham alive."

"How large?"

"Two thousand dollars."

"And if he is dead?"

Mr. Wickham looked Harry straight in the eye.

"It might be five thousand dollar under certain circumstances," he said, meaningly.

"What circumstances?"

"Can't you see?"

"Perhaps I can, but I prefer to have you state."

"Then here it is. If these wretches have killed Rollingham I don't want to be put to the trouble of bringing them to justice. If you can tie them up somewhere and make them give up those proxies and sign them over to me, if they have been assigned to them in legal shape by one Thomas Wickham, your reward will be five."

"And then send them about their business?"

"Yes."

"Good! I think we understand each other, Mr. Wickham. I will do my best. Can you describe these men to me?"

Mr. Wickham could, and did.

The description was rather vague, however.

It might have fitted three jays from Joplin, or for that matter from anywhere else.

And here the interview practically ended.

When Young King Brady left Mr. Wickham he felt that he was parting with a consummate rascal.

Indeed, everyone connected with this mysterious triple case seemed to be tarred with the same stick.

Harry returned to the office to find a note written by his

chief which stated that inasmuch as he would be detained in Elizabeth, N. J., until a late hour, he would not be back, but should go directly to Claremont to keep the appointment with the "Joplin Jay."

CHAPTER IV.

OLD KING BRADY INTERVIEWS COLONEL FISHLAKE.

If Mr. Wickham had been indefinite in his statements then certainly Old King Brady's mysterious greengoods client had been more so.

To look for the vanished handshaker of the gang was like looking for a needle in a haystack.

It was to be taken as a compliment, coming from a shady quarter, that the greengoods man thought of the Bradys in their trouble.

But the old detective had inside information on the matter, of course, and knew just where to start in on his work.

Accordingly, at nine P. M. Old King Brady turned up at Claremont station, having walked up the tracks of the Central Railroad of New Jersey from the station below, no trains stopping at Claremont at night, as has been said.

We have already described this lonely spot.

Enough to add that now it was even more lonely than usual, for the night was a blustery one and some rain had fallen during the latter part of the day.

As the old detective sat down on the bench in front of the little building thinking of his lonely vigil there a few nights before, there was not a soul to be seen.

It was now exactly nine o'clock, and Old King Brady, remembering his former experience, made up his mind that half an hour must be the limit of his wait.

But it was not to be that long.

Ten minutes had scarcely elapsed when the old detective spied a tall figure coming toward him cross lots from the direction of the oilyards over by the bay shore.

He arose and watched it.

Soon he saw that it was a man roughly dressed, wearing his trousers thrust into his boots and a big broad-brimmed felt hat upon his head.

He came hurrying on and, crossing the track, approached the old detective, who stood leaning against the station waiting for him.

"Good-evening, friend," said Old King Brady, looking askance at a rifle which the fellow carried over his shoulder.

"Evening," grunted the man, who in his peculiar dress, aided by a long goat's beard, certainly looked the "jay" right down to the ground. "You will be a stranger in these parts, I reckon?"

"Same to you," replied the detective.

"Do you expect to get a train here for New York?"

"No."

"You won't; thar don't none stop."

"So I believe."

"What be you hyar fur, then?"

"Joplin."

"Good!"

"Well?"

"I said good."

"I heard what you said, but you probably intend to say something more."

"Yaas. You look like him."

"Like who?"

"The man I come hyar to meet."

"Who is he?"

"A feller about your size who wears a long blue coat with brass buttons."

"I've got that."

"And an old-fashioned necktie and collar, same as my grandad wore."

"I've got that, too."

"And a big white hat something like mine."

"You see it. Why all this talk? You are Mr. Bodd Prouty, I suppose?"

"No, that hain't my name."

"Well?"

"My name's Fishlake, Kun'l Fishlake. Bodd Prouty couldn't come, so I came instead."

"That's enough. State your business."

"You are Old King Brady, the detective?"

"I am. Your friend Prouty wrote me."

"He writ you twict. Fust time you didn't come."

"I did come and waited a long time, but no one showed up."

"So?"

"Yes."

"What night was this?"

"Night before last."

"Sho! Why, that letter was writ last week."

"Then why didn't Prouty date it? It asked me to come next night."

"Didn't he date it?"

"No, he didn't."

"Then that's whar the mistake comes in."

"Evidently. But go ahead, get down to business. I don't want to stay here in this miserable hole."

"Will you help us?"

"Yes; otherwise I wouldn't have been here."

"But say, it hain't altogether straight bizness."

"Ha!"

"Will that make a difference?"

"Not if the jay is all right."

"That's what I said. You detectives is all thieves and robbers. You had jest as soon take a crooked case as a straight one so long as yer get yer pay."

"Of course; but we want more money for the crooked cases than we do for the straight ones."

"Sartin, sartin. What did Prouty offer you now?"

"Twenty dollars."

"And what more would you want?"

"At least double if the job is crooked."

"Huh! That's high."

"I come high."

"When would you want your pay?"

"When the job is done."

"Waal, that's different."

"Just as you say."

"You have been very highly reckermended to me."

"I'm glad of that."

"Shall we call it a go?"

"Oh, yes. I'm willing. Sit down here on this bench and tell me all about the case."

"Waal, I'dn' know. Yer see, I orter ask Prouty fust off."

"Can't we see Mr. Prouty to-night?"

"Waal, no. He's went over to New York to-day, and the fact is he hain't showed up sence. That's why I came."

"Well, I can't waste time over this business, and I shan't come here again."

"I s'pose not. Waal, I s'pose I might as well tell yer."

"Suit yourself."

"Reckon I will. Looker hyer, it's like this, me an' my friends, Bodd Prouty and a feller named Pete Butts, we live out near Joplin, Missouri, mebbe you've hearn tell of that ar' town?"

"Oh, yes."

"Waal, we got a letter, that is, I did, from a gent in New York who telled me that he had got hold of a lot of printin' plates what was stole from the treasury department, the kind they make money offn, you know."

"I understand."

"He writ me that he had made a hull lot of greenbacks offn these yer plates, bein' a printer by trade, and that I'd been reckermended to him as a safe man to deal with, and that he'd sell me that ar' money for twenty-five cents on the dollar, see?"

"I understand."

"He said he had a lot of it and how much could I use. I writ back and told him to send me a sample, and he did, and it was good money, for the cashier of the Joplin bank told me so."

"And so you came on."

"Yaas, me and my friends. We raised a lot; say, we raised fifty thousand dollars, and the reason we raised so much was because we knew jest what we wanted to do with the mun after we got it, see?"

"What was it?"

"Oh, come now, I'm not telling yon that; that's private."

"All right; go on."

"Waal, we got an answer sayin' that the man would meet us hyar at this station and when would we be thar. We put the date a week ahead, for we wanted to see something of New York fust off, never having been hyar before."

"Yes, yes, I understand. And you saw New York?"

"Oh, yaas. We rid around in a wagon an' a feller with a trumpet he showed us everything."

"The rubber-neck wagon. Yes, I know."

"Say, they don't call it that. They call it the seein' New York wagon."

"All right. Go on."

"Waal, I'm makin' a long story of it. We met that feller an' he took us to a hotel down Jersey City, and—waal, we was took up to a room and he showed us some of the money and said he'd get the rest if we'd wait."

"And you gave him your fifty thousand?"

"Waal, waal——"

"You did?"

"Say, he seemed a very nice man, Mr. Brady. He said he only had to go around the corner to get the money, and if we'd wait——"

"And you waited?"

"Yes, by thunder, we did wait!" Colonel Fishlake suddenly bellowed, "and we've been a-waitin' ever sence!"

The colonel had now worked himself up into a fury.

He roared so hard that Old King Brady half feared that his bellowing might be heard, lonely as the place was.

"Don't make so much noise," he said. "We don't want the police to get onto us."

"By George, sir, we don't! Of course this hain't like counterfeitin' or showin' counterfeit money, for in this case the money is good."

"Oh!"

"Sure it is. I showed the sample to the cashier of the Joplin bank, and he said it was as good as wheat."

"All right, Colonel. Now let us understand each other. What you want me to do is to help you get that money back?"

"Yaas; ef yer can. I hev my doubts."

"You need have none. I think I know this gang of swindlers, for that is what they are."

"Sho! You don't say! That's what Bodd Prouty said, but I thought different."

"How different?"

"Waal, I thought ez how it was a trick tew——"

"Well?"

"I hain't a tellin' what I thought."

"All right. Now, then, did the man get all your money?"

"No siree! You bet he didn't. We only give him half, and we telled him we'd give him the other half when he fetched the stuff."

"And you actually gave up twenty-five thousand dollars to a stranger?"

"That's what we did."

"It was a big risk."

"That's what I said."

"What was the name signed to the letters you received?"

"It was Yellowlee, sir, Col. J. H. Yellowlee, Fifth Avenue Hotel."

"Now let me describe a man to you and see if he fits the man who took your cash."

"Say, we had to do it, Mr. Brady. He said he had to pay for the money afore he could get it. He said that was the only way Colonel Yellowlee would do business."

"Exactly. It's rather a new way for these fellows to

do business, too, but it seems to have worked all right in your case. I don't understand why he didn't make you give up all."

"Waal, yer see we didn't take all, and we telled him that. We thought ez how we'd try it on with half fust and see ef the money we got was good."

"Then that aaccounts for it. Now, what name did this man who met you give?"

"Waal, he said his name was Smith."

"A man about thirty-five?"

"Yaas."

"Light hair, blue eyes and a very smooth-spoken voice?"

"Yaas, and say, I'll tell yer who he looked like and mebbe you could see the man. Fust off I thought he was that feller, but ez I'd only seen him onct out to Joplin, so I couldn't be sure."

"I don't exaetly understand you."

"What I mean to say is, he looked something like Mr. Rollingham, vice president of the Wickham Lead Company, of Joplin, what keeps an office on Wall street, New York. If you could call there you'd see him. I'd go with yer and introduce yer, only I hev reasons for not doin' it, see?"

"All right. Did this man have a big brown mole under the left eye?"

"By gosh, he did, sir! You know him, I see."

"I do."

"Kin yer find him an' make him give us the money?"

"Your money?"

"No, the other money. Thet's what we come on from Joplin for, or at least part of it."

"What was your other reason?"

"Oh, waal now, I kean't tell yer that."

"All right. But, Colonel, you must understand that you have been deceived. These men had no false money. It is an old fake, but they seem to have played the game differently from what they usually do."

"Sho! You don't say! Then we've been sueked in?"

"Most undoubtably."

"I'd like to come up with him, then! I'd just like to come up with him onct!" roared Colonel Fishlake. "Know what I'd do?"

As he shouted this out the colonel suddenly drew a huge bowie knife, which he began sharpening up for business on the leg of his boot.

"Know what I'd do?" he bellowed. "I'd give him two inches of this here! Gee whiz! I'd make him jump!"

"Put up your knife, man, if you expect to do business with me," said Old King Brady, sternly. "Now, where can you be seen?"

"You will take the matter up, then?"

"Yes, I will. and I have strong hopes of being able to get your money back."

"Good enuff. You'll get yer pay if you do."

"Forty dollars for reecoovering twenty-five thousand?"

"Yes. Hain't it enuff? I wanter be liberal. S'pose we mak it fifty?"

"That would be better. Where do you live?"

"Oh, say, I can't tell yer that. We are lying low. I wouldn't want the poliee to get onto this deal."

"I should say not. But how am I going to get at you?"

"S'posin' we eall on you?"

"Very good."

"When?"

"Give me a day to work in. Call to-morrow night at eight o'elock."

"At your office, where Bodd Prouty writ the letter tew?"

"Yes."

"Waal, we'll be thar."

"All three of you."

"What's that fer?"

"I must be acquainted with all of you or I can't do business."

"Waal, I'll try. Pete Butts and me'll come, but I can't promise for Bodd Prouty. Bodd's tuk to wanderin' off to York by himself lately. I don't jest understand it, but—waal, I'll try and get him thar."

"All right. Now, I'm going to leave you."

"Don't you want something for expenses? It's goin' to cost you somethin' to ride in them blame 'leetric cars if you kin make them eonduetors stop for yer, which is more'n I kin do half the time."

"It might be just as well."

"All right, I'll give yer a dollar 'n a harf for expenses. Thar yer be. If yer need any more I'll give it to yer to-morrer night."

Old King Brady pocketed his liberal retainer.

"Good-night, Colonel," he said. "I am going to walk up the hill now and take one of those electric cars."

They parted.

Old King Brady pushed on up Claremont avenue a short distance and then turned.

Over in the meadow he could see the tall form of Colonel Fishlake with his rifle over his shoulder trudging along toward the oil tanks.

"Heavens, what a jay!" muttered the detective; "but what is this secret motive which seems to underlie all this business? That's what gets away with me."

The old detective continued to watch the Joplin Jay until he had disappeared in the darkness and then pushed on over the hill.

CHAPTER V.

BROTHER BODD FALLS AMONG THIEVES.

While Old King Brady was having a session with one of the Joplin Jays, Harry was finding lots to do with another of that interesting trio, as will now be seen.

Harry, finding that his partner was not to return to the office, determined to put in the evening there working on Old King Brady's big scrapbooks, in which are kept pasted newspaper euttings relating to notorious crimes and erim-

inals likely to prove of service to the detectives in their work.

This pasting business had rather dropped behind of late, and Young King Brady, throwing off his coat, went to work with the determination to clear off the accumulation that night, if possible.

Up to half-past seven no one appeared to disturb him, and then came the sound of heavy footsteps on the stairs, followed by a resounding thump on the door.

"Confound it! Someone to bother me!" thought Harry, as he called "Come in."

The door opened, and a man wearing big boots, into which his trousers were tucked, a brown calico shirt with an old coat and no vest, and a back-number hat, craned his neck through the door.

"Say, be I right or be I wrong?" he drawled. "Is this yere whar Old King Brady, the detective, lives?"

"One of the Joplin Jays, or I'm a ghost," thought Harry.

"Oh, come right in!" he exclaimed. "This is the right place."

The man sidled through the door, staring about.

"Say, don't yer guy me, young feller, fer I don't stand fer that," he said. "I've licked two men to-day fer guyin' me, and I kin lick you."

"That's all right," said Harry. "I'm not going to guy you, friend."

"But you hain't Old King Brady; no, not none."

"I didn't say I was. I am his partner all the same, though."

"Oh!"

"Yes."

"Then you are Young King Brady?"

"Sure I am."

"Oh!"

"Yes."

"Waal, I s'pose yew'll dew."

"I hope so; but who are you?"

"I writ two letters to Old King Brady, mebbe you read them?"

"Oh! You must be the gentleman from Joplin, then?"

"Yaas, from near Joplin. I don't live in the town."

"Mr. Bodd Prouty?"

"Waal, I drop the mister usually. Jest Bodd Prouty."

"Glad to see you, Mr. Prouty."

"I dunno whether you will be or not when I tell yew what I've come fer."

"How is that?"

"I don't want Old King Brady now. I want call off."

"But Old King Brady has gone out to Claremont to meet you."

"Sho! I'm sorry for it!" cried the jay, in a tone of deep vexation. "I'm right sorry to hear it. I thought ez heow I'd be hyar in time to head him off."

"No, he has gone."

"Pshaw! Thet's tew blame bad. Why didn't he go the other night?"

"He did go, but you were not there."

"Waal, I wuz thar."

"What night?"

Mr. Prouty named the night.

"Oh, that was three or four nights before he went," said Harry. "Your letter said the next night, but it had no date."

"No, I guess not. I writ that letter several days ago; then I writ another and give it to a friend of mine to post, but he forgot it until yesterday. When I found he had posted it I come here to head Old King Brady off, for I don't want to see him now."

"Then there will be no one there to meet him?"

"Waal, I dunno about that ar'. There might an' then again thar mightn't. Ef thar is you kin tell Old King Brady to drop the case. Tell him I say so, an' he needn't pay no attention to what Tom Fishlake or Pete Butts says, for they hain't got no money, an' won't pay none, an' thar won't be nothin' to it for him."

"All right, I'll tell him. But what was the case you wanted him on?"

Bodd Prouty, who had dropped into a chair, crossed his long legs and screwed up his face.

"Say, boy, I hain't a tellin'," he drawled. "Some folks might take me for a jay, but that's whar they'd get left. I know when to talk and when to keep my mouth shut. If so be that Old King Brady finds out from my partners, and mebbe it will be so, yew tell him that it will pay him best tew ferget what he's heerd, see?"

"All right," said Harry. "I didn't know but you had lost some money or something."

"Waal, mebbe I hev an' mebbe I havn't. It hain't none of your affair."

"Right. I'm not a bit curious."

"You hain't, hey? Waal, I say you air, but tain't no sort of use to try to pump me."

Harry was silent.

Mr. Bodd Prouty had screwed up the other side of his face now and he certainly looked pretty fierce.

"Thet's all," he said, rising. "I reckon I'll be going now."

"All right, glad you called in," replied Harry, in his balmiest tone. "Look in again. Old King Brady would like to make your acquaintance. Drop in and out often while you are in town."

Harry was only trying to be pleasant.

The result was startling.

Suddenly Mr. Prouty sprang to his feet and, whipping out a huge navy revolver, planked it at Harry's head.

"Hang yew, yer guying me!" he shouted. "Say, yew young fibbergibbit, I've bored holes in more'n one man fer less nor that. I've a good mind to bore a hole into yew!"

"Don't," said Harry, quietly enough, considering the circumstances. "It wouldn't pay you. If I said anything to offend you I beg your pardon, I'm sure."

"Yew'd better," growled the jay, and he stalked out of the office, slamming the door.

This was the time Young King Brady showed that he knew his business.

While talking with Mr. Wickham, Harry had felt sure that he was being deceived and that Mr. Rollingham had been missing longer than the mine president cared to have him believe.

And here again in the case of Mr. Prouty.

The letters sent by him he admitted were older than they had appeared to be on their face.

This added to the mystery, and Harry had no intention of letting so good a chance to get at the truth of it all slip past him.

The instant Bodd Prouty left the office Young King Brady, clapping on a red wig and a false mustache, was after him like a flash.

Even as he went downstairs Young King Brady was disguising.

By the time he had reached Park Row he was an entirely different looking fellow.

Was he too late after all?

At first Harry thought so.

He looked up street and down, but could see nothing of his man.

Then a cab rolled past the door.

From the window a head was projected.

It was the head of Mr. Bodd Prouty, the Joplin Jay!

He was rubbering up at the windows of the Bradys' office.

"Ha! He's onto me! The lights are out and he knows I'm out, too," thought Harry. "I'm in for a long shadowing, I guess."

He sprang upon a passing surface car.

Keeping on the rear platform, he was able to watch the movements of the cab.

And Young King Brady had no fear of losing it.

His sharp eyes had caught sight of a woman in the cab.

"That old duffer is out for some adventure," thought Harry. "Some crook has him in tow and will skin the last cent out of him if I don't prevent it, so now is my time to catch on and get next."

At Chatham Square the car was a little ahead of the cab.

This was just what Harry wanted.

He dropped off and made a dive for one of the cabs which nightly stand in the square ready for the Chinatown slummers or any other midnight wanderer about town.

Most of the drivers of these cabs are known to the Bradys.

It took but a second to give his driver the tip, and Harry settled back and lighted a cigar.

"Perhaps they will go no further than Chinatown," he thought; "but wherever they do head for Ben will keep them in sight."

Ben was the cab driver, of course, and Ben knew his business.

Knowing this, Young King Brady did not bother his head about the Joplin Jay for the next twenty minutes.

Then the cab stopped and Harry was out like a flash.

"They have gone into the Tivoli, Mr. Brady," said the driver, looking down.

They were now in the far-famed "tenderloin," that dangerous section of the city where police captains turn millionaires and jays from Joplin and elsewhere part with their cash.

The Tivoli—it is not running now, so we need not particularly locate it—was a common hall occupying the upper floor of an old two-story brick building over a saloon whose reputation was the very worst.

"Good heavens! that fellow will be skinned alive up there!" exclaimed Harry.

"I should say so," replied Ben. "He looked to be a terrible jay."

"That's what he is."

"But he didn't seem full at all."

"You don't know his kind. They can drink a barrel and never show it."

"Shall I wait here, Mr. Brady?"

"Well, you might, Ben," replied Harry, paying the man. "That is, if you have nothing else on hand. I may be gone a long time."

"I'll wait awhile, anyway," said the cabby, and Harry went upstairs.

It was just a big hall with a row of tables around it and a dancing floor occupying the middle of the large room.

At one end was a raised platform, where a man with long hair sat thumping on a piano, accompanied by a violin.

Several couples were waltzing, but the majority of the guests sat around at the tables.

It was early yet, and the business of the place was not in full swing.

Away down in front Harry saw the Joplin Jay and his female companion sitting at a table by themselves.

Although none but "soft" drinks were then supposed to be sold in the Tivoli, Bodd Prouty was just being served with whisky by a white-aproned waiter, the liquor having been sent up on a dumbwaiter from the saloon below.

Young King Brady now had a chance to study Prouty's companion.

Seen in the full light he instantly recognized her as one Flossie French, a well-known female crook, who was believed to be the wife of a notorious greengoods man.

"Ah there, you jay from Joplin!" thought Harry, "you're in the soup! If you still have your wad heaven help you; it will be your lucky night if you escape with your life."

And for more than an hour Harry watched the couple.

In order to do this without attracting too much attention, he was forced to take to the dancing floor himself once or twice.

Flossie French seemed to be trying to persuade Bodd Prouty to do something he did not want to go in for.

Again and again Harry heard him say:

"No! No, I won't! Don't ask me again. I won't go!"

But the woman did ask him again, and that was the time Bodd Prouty got his mad up.

Perhaps the vile wood alcohol whisky he had been drinking had something to do with it.

Suddenly springing to his feet, the gentleman from Joplin let out that historic cry, the old Missouri yell.

It made the walls of the Tivoli fairly ring.

"Gee whiz, sis!" he shouted, "shut up and don't bother me no more. Come, let's have a dance!"

He seized Mrs. French around the waist and lifted her to the floor.

"Jay! Jay!"

"Hey, Rube!"

"Waltz with his whiskers, Flossie!"

"Go it, grandpop!"

These and similar cries mingled with catcalls rang out through the dance hall.

But the Joplin Jay was not getting excited over any such little thing as that.

Before Flossie French knew where she was at he had her waltzing, and to the surprise of everyone the gentleman from Joplin waltzed well.

"What a terrible Rube he is," remarked the girl whom Young King Brady had chosen as his partner.

"Isn't he?" replied Harry. "Has he ever been here before?"

"Oh, yes, three or four times. There were three of them here the other night, but the other two weren't no good. They wouldn't spend a cent."

"And will this one?"

"You bet."

"What's his name?"

"Oh, how should I know. Dey call him 'Uncle Hi.' Oh, say, here's Bill! Now there'll be fun!"

A man dressed in the height of fashion came rushing up the stairs.

Harry recognized him instantly as one "Bill" French, a notorious greengoods operator.

That he and Flossie worked together at blackmailing countrymen every detective in New York knew.

French darted across the floor and planted himself in the path of the waltzing couple.

Then the fun began.

"Oh! my husband!"

"Old man, what are you doing with my wife?"

It was all a farce, of course.

The next minute it looked as though it might end up in a tragedy, for Bodd Prouty yanked out his big navy revolver and banged away into the air.

"Back away from me, boy!" he roared. "Back away from me or the next pill will go down your throat!"

CHAPTER VI.

OLD KING BRADY INVESTIGATES.

From what has been told in the preceding chapter it will be seen that Harry's experience with his Joplin Jay was as lively as Old King Brady's was dull.

Indeed the old detective left Claremont that night with his mind made up to crowd matters, for the case was proceeding altogether too slowly to suit him.

He returned to the old house on Washington Square, where he and Harry had kept bachelors' hall for some time, expecting to find his partner there.

But the night passed and Harry did not show up.

Naturally worried, the old detective turned up early at the office, to find a scrap of a note written by Harry lying on his desk.

"Governor, I have had a call from Bodd Prouty and have gone on the shadow," was the way it read.

"Come," thought Old King Brady, "the boy has got busy even if I can't. I wish, though, he had taken time to tell me what the lead people had to say."

Old King Brady now dismissed his fears, for he knew that Harry was perfectly well able to take care of himself.

But the old detective had no idea of spending the day in idleness.

Old King Brady is a man of many resources and, considering his age, remarkably quick to act.

Metaphorically speaking, he now threw off his coat and went to work.

The first thing he did was to wire the chief of police at Joplin, Mo., as follows:

"Wire full information concerning Bodd Prouty, Col. Tom Fishlake, Pete Butts of your town. Collect.

"JAMES BRADY."

Now, as it happens Old King Brady has had business in Joplin, and the chief of police was a man he had met.

Having sent the dispatch, Old King Brady hurried to the Wall street office of a certain stock broker who for some years has had charge of his investments.

He found the broker already at his desk, as he knew would be the case, and he immediately began asking about the "Wickham Lead Company."

"Well, you could not have come to a better man, Mr. Brady," said the broker. "As it happens, I had occasion to look those people up two weeks ago on the quiet. They are trying to get their stock listed on the Mining Exchange, and I was one of a committee appointed to do the investigating. We sent a mining expert to Joplin, and only yesterday he rendered his report."

"Good!" said Old King Brady. "I was sure you could help me, either directly or through someone else. Well, what is the word?"

"Here is a copy of the report, which you can read for yourself," replied the broker, and he handed the old detective a typewritten document several pages in length.

Old King Brady read the report carefully.

In substance it was as follows:

The Wickham lead property was an old one which had been for many years abandoned.

It was located on the farm of one Thomas Wickham, deceased, ten miles out of Joplin, and, having been recently

taken in hand by Henry Wickham, the dead man's brother, was now being worked to a large profit under a new system of handling the ore.

The Wickham brothers had been associated together in developing the mine, Henry being the practical man.

This was the person Harry had met. The report mentioned that he had led a roving life, was a person of wide experience, very sharp and unscrupulous and possessed of considerable means.

It was furthermore stated that Thomas Wickham before his death gave to his brother almost half the stock in the mine, retaining the controlling interest himself.

This he had willed to his only child, he being a widower, a son, named for himself, a deaf mute and not over-bright.

This young man, now just turned twenty-one, was entirely incapable of managing the mine, and his interests were in charge of one Boddman Prouty, a farmer, and a neighbor of his father's and one of the executors of the will.

The report went on to say that this man Prouty was an ignorant, pig-headed person, who had made the company all kinds of trouble; that he had persistently opposed Henry Wickham and was now threatening to oust him from the presidency of the company and to elect himself president in his stead, with the help of young Tom.

Regarding C. H. Rollingham, the vice president, the report stated that he had of late been the acting business manager of the New York end of the business owing to the ill health of Mr. H. Wickham.

It was further stated that Mr. Rollingham was a good business man, but a mysterious person, to whose past business career the committee had been unable to gain the slightest clew.

"Good!" said Old King Brady, handing back the papers to his broker. "This tells me exactly what I want to know. Does the Mining Exchange propose to list the stock?"

"Not until these people settle their quarrels," replied the broker. "Perhaps you can give us a pointer, Mr. B."

"I'm sure I can in a few days," replied Old King Brady, upon whom light was beginning to dawn. "Do you happen to know when the annual meeting of the company takes place?"

"It was booked for to-morrow," replied the broker, but yesterday the Exchange was notified that it had been postponed until next Wednesday on account of the strange disappearance of Mr. Rollingham. I suppose you saw about that in the papers. I daresay that is the case you are working on now."

"I know that the man has disappeared, but as it happens I am not working on the case."

"Oh, I thought you were."

"No; and now let me ask, has any of the mining stock been thrown on the market?"

"Some. They trade in it a little on the curb."

"Could you buy me a few shares?"

"Certainly."

"Do it, please. What's it worth?"

"Eighty-five."

"The mine is really a good one?"

"The very best. There is a fortune in sight for somebody, if these people can get down to business and stop quarreling among themselves."

"Buy me ten shares," said Old King Brady, and with this he left and returned to the office.

Harry was not on hand nor was there any word from him.

Old King Brady now laid aside his quaint attire, which has, to a certain extent, become a trademark with the old detective, and dressed himself like a prosperous man of means.

Every facility for such disguises the Bradys always keep on hand at their office.

By the aid of a gray wig and a false beard the old detective completely changed his appearance.

He now left the office and, calling a cab, was driven up to the building on Twenty-seventh street, where the attack had been made on him two nights before.

Alighting here, the old detective ascended to the top floor.

So careful had been his mental work that night, although blindfolded, that he was able to walk directly to the door of the room into which he had been taken.

The door bore the sign: "J. Isham, Artist."

Old King Brady was all ready to interview Mr. J. Isham, Artist, but he did not have that pleasure, for the door was locked, and persistent knocking brought no response.

Old King Brady now tried the other doors, but all were locked.

As none of them bore any sign, he could only come to the conclusion that they concealed vacant offices or studios, and he went downstairs to the art school and asked for the proprietor.

A civil-spoken man responded.

"I was looking for Mr. Isham," the detective said. "His studio seems to be locked. Perhaps you can tell me when I can catch him in."

"You mean the man on the top floor?" asked the man.

"Yes."

"I know nothing about him."

"Is there anybody in the building who does?"

"Possibly the janitor, but he doesn't live here, and I don't know where you could find him."

"Is there anybody else on the top floor?"

"I hire the other rooms. We hold our life classes up there in the afternoon."

This was very unsatisfactory, and Old King Brady gave it up.

As he left the building he crossed to the other side of the street and stood for a few moments watching.

The building adjoining the art school on the east attracted his attention.

This was an old-fashioned dwelling, with a saloon in the basement, a table d'hôte restaurant on the parlor floor, and above the windows were carefully hung with heavy lace curtains.

"A suspicious-looking joint," thought the old detective. "It ought to be investigated, but I don't care to give the time to it now. Ha! What have we here?"

Out through the front door three persons had just come, a man and two women.

The women were expensively gowned.

Old King Brady put them down for chorus girls or variety actresses at a glance.

The man wore a dress suit half concealed by a long spring overcoat, and would have passed for a professional anywhere.

All this told nothing.

These people might have been having breakfast at the restaurant, and any casual observer would have so supposed, but one look at their faces told Old King Brady a very different story.

"Opium fiends!" muttered the old detective. "They have been hitting the pipe all right, surest thing. I wonder if there can be a joint upstairs there?"

And if this was true it was a discovery worth making.

It is a well-known fact that the greengoods men are almost all slaves to the opium habit.

It was easy to imagine a connecting door between Mr. Isham's studio and the house adjoining.

In his present disguise, however, Old King Brady could not safely attempt to investigate further.

"I'll find out during the day," he said to himself, and, entering his cab, he was driven downtown.

And later Old King Brady easily obtained the desired information, and it came directly from the police.

His suspicions were correct.

The place was an opium joint newly opened and largely patronized by theatrical people.

The day passed and Harry did not return.

Toward night a dispatch came from Joplin.

It read as follows:

"To James Brady, New York:

"Three bad men. Prouty poses as respectable, but is not. Fishlake shyster lawyer; crook. Butts, brawler and all-around tough. Look sharp in dealing with them.

"J. C. LEVERAND, Chief Police."

Thus the day had not been lost, and when evening set in Old King Brady felt that he was in pretty good shape to meet his Joplin Jays.

"I'll take the bull by the horns," he said to himself. "Whoever that man was who talked to me over the screen I'll find him and he shall meet his come-ons face to face."

And the thought had scarcely crossed his mind when there came a great tramping on the stairs.

Its cause was soon explained, for, when Old King Brady called "come in" in response to a knock on the door, it opened to admit Col. Tom Fishlake and a man who might have been his twin brother, so far as his makeup went.

Both wore big boots with their trousers thrust into them and big slouch hats.

All that was needed was a belt stuck full of revolvers and knives to complete the picture.

The Joplin Jays had come.

Here were two "badmen" from Missouri.

"Howdy, Captain!" exclaimed Colonel Fishlake, striding across the office floor with extended hand.

CHAPTER VII.

HARRY CAPTURES HIS JAY.

Mr. Bodd Prouty had the hall to himself in a moment. Bill French ducked, and, dodging past him, ran for his life.

Flossie fled after her husband, while the dancers abandoned the floor and crowded against the tables, many of them making for the stairs.

"Come on! Come on, you coward!" roared the jay, sending a shot after the flying French.

Probably he had no intention of hitting the blackmailer, for the shot flew wild.

In a twinkling French and his wife vanished through an inner door.

In the meanwhile Young King Brady's partner had deserted him and run downstairs, leaving Harry standing near the musicians' platform watching the jay, who was flourishing his revolver.

Now Prouty started toward the door through which French had vanished, shouting to the girl to come back.

"There'll be fun in a minute," thought Young King Brady. "I wonder it has held off so long."

It came right then.

As Prouty reached the door it flew open and six young toughs, headed by French, came charging out.

"Do the jay! Do the Rube!" they cried, and jumped on the Joplin gentleman.

"Don't kill him!" shouted French. "I've got use for him!"

So sudden was it all that Prouty had no chance.

The revolver was struck from his hand and, although he fought furiously, he was down on the floor in an instant, with the toughs kicking him and pounding him for all they were worth.

It was Young King Brady's call now.

He jumped to the rescue.

"Hold on there! He's my man!" he shouted, at the same time displaying his shield.

For the moment it looked as if the gang meant to turn on Harry.

Just then a man poked his head through the door.

"That goes, boys!" he cried.

And then to Harry he called:

"Get him out of here, quick, or I'll have you both done up, see?"

The gang fell away and with French ran downstairs.

Bruised and battered, the Joplin Jay, assisted by Young King Brady, scrambled to his feet.

"Whar's my gun!" he roared. "Blast 'em! Whar's my gun! I'll do 'em yet!"

"Come, friend, come!" said Young King Brady, catching his arm. "It isn't safe for you to stay here. Come with me or we shall both land in jail."

"Quick!" shouted the man at the door. "Get that jay out of here, or by thunder I won't answer for the consequences!"

It was hard work, but Young King Brady got there.

Partly by coaxing, partly by force, he got Bodd Prouty downstairs into the street.

And even then the Joplin gal man wanted to go back and clean the place out.

"You mustn't. It will get you into all kinds of trouble," persisted Harry. "Let's call a cab and get out of this. If you have been robbed we will have those fellows arrested. I know this town and you don't."

"By jingo, son, that's so," growled Prouty. "Ye'r a right good feller to jump in and help me like this yere. You won't regret it, neither. Say, I'm yer friend fer life."

"Pleasant prospect," thought Young King Brady.

A crowd was collecting.

Under ordinary circumstances there would have been trouble right there on the sidewalk, but the word had been passed about among the crowd that the little fellow was a detective, and no one made a move to interfere, although the jay was roaring out his sentiments in foghorn tones which could have been heard over on Broadway.

Young King Brady had meanwhile signaled to Ben, and in a moment he had his man inside the cab.

"Drive downtown anywhere," ordered Harry.

He sprang in, slammed the door and away they went.

The last thing Harry noticed was Bill French glaring at him from the rear of the crowd.

"Come, I've spoiled his pie, anyhow," thought Harry. "I wonder if he knows me? I don't believe he does."

He sank back on the seat all out of breath and ready for whatever was to come.

Meanwhile, Bodd Prouty kept on swearing for a few moments, then gradually calming down.

"Say, son, whar you taking me?" he demanded, after a minute of silence.

Not for an instant had he suspected Harry of being the detective he had called on earlier in the evening; that was certain enough.

"I'm not taking you anywhere," replied Harry, laughing. "You were in a tough hole, Mister. If you have any money about you they would have cleaned you out of every cent."

"Sho! Is that so?"

"It is so."

"Waal, I've got money, all right, son, and don't you forget it."

He thrust his hand deep into his pocket and drew out a huge roll of bills.

"Heaters! How did they ever come to miss it!" thought

Harry. "Some mistake somewhere. I don't see what Bill French was thinking about. He must have been playing for bigger game.

"Put it up," he said aloud. "It isn't safe to show money like that in this town."

"No?"

"No, sir!"

"Waal, yew won't rob me, I reckon."

"Indeed I wouldn't, sir."

"Yer look honest. Say, it was almighty kind of yew to jump in and help me, but I don't see how you done it."

"Oh, I know the man who keeps that joint. I made a sign to him which told him that you were a friend of mine."

"Oh! Was that it?"

"Yes."

"Waal, I dunno. I wisht I knew yer better. What's yer name?"

"Dave Brown."

"So? Mine's Bodd Prouty. And say, I'll tell you a secret. I don't belong in this hyar town."

"You don't? Anyone would take you to be a New Yorker."

"Neow come, boy, yer guyin' me. Everybody has been callin' me a jay ever sence I struck this yere town. I know I must look like one—you can't fool me."

"Well, I'm not trying, Mister. If you would only dress a little different folks wouldn't take you for a jay."

"That so? Now what would yew have me dew?"

"Oh, well, for instance, people don't wear long boots here unless they are going hunting."

"Sho! I noticed that everybody weared shoes."

"Yes, that's the style here. Then, again, your hat isn't the latest fashion."

"It's the fashion whar I come from, out back of Joplin, Missouri."

"Very likely but this isn't Joplin. Then, again, that shirt of yours is hardly the thing here."

"What's the matter with my shirt. It's clean, hain't it? I had it washed jest before I started away from home."

"Oh, it isn't that. People wear white shirts here when they go out for the evening and also vests."

"Sho! I never had a b'iled shirt on in my life. Waal, we kin change all that; but say, what's your business?"

Harry had expected this question and he had already decided on his answer.

He threw back the lapel of his coat and displayed his detective's shield.

Bodd Prouty stared at it curiously.

"What's that? Be yew a fireman?" he asked.

"No."

"Mebbe yew are deputy sheriff."

"That is nearer. I am a police detective."

"Gee whiz! Is that so?"

"Yes. That's the way I got you out of that place. If it hadn't been for that shield you and your roll would have parted company. However came you to go into the place?"

"I went with that gal you seen me dancing with."

"But she is the wife of the man who attacked you. Both are notorious crooks. They belong to the greengoods gang."

"Greengoods! You mean counterfeit money?"

"No counterfeit money. It's all a fake. Those fellows write around the country pretending to have counterfeit money for sale. They haven't got it. They get people who don't know New York to come on and buy and then rob them of good money, do you see?"

Bodd Prouty listened with intense interest.

"Kean't they be arrested for that?" he asked.

"Sure they can."

"And sent to prison?"

"Of course."

"Kin yew arrest 'em?"

"Certainly."

"Why didn't yew arrest that feller to-night then?"

"I had no proof that he had done such a thing."

"Hum! Say, kin you arrest one in Jersey?"

"Yes."

"I wish I could trust yew, young feller. I could put yer onto a good thing, and—waal, we could both make money."

"Tell me about it. You can trust me."

"Dunno about that."

"Well, I can't prove it."

"S'pose not. I was ergwinter get a detective what's named Old King Brady, but I got afraid of him. Then that ar' gal come to me and telled me she could get my money back if I'd dew jest as she said."

"Hello! You have lost money that way, then, Mr. Prouty."

"Waal, I hate to own up thet I was sucked in, but it's trew."

Harry's fine work was having its effect.

He hastened to assure Budd Prouty that he was out for the stuff, and that if anyone in New York could recover his money he was the man.

"Why, I know all those fellows," he wound up by saying. "I'd like to bet you that I can describe the man who got your dough."

"Try it," said the jay, who had been listening in silence to all that was said.

Then Young King Brady described the once notorious greengoods man, Harry Ryerson, which description he had received from Old King Brady.

Prouty's eyes grew big.

"That's the feller!" he cried. "That's the very man, but yew have got the name wrong."

"Oh, those fellows have all kinds of names. Tell me the whole story and I can help you, sure."

"I can't," said the jay. "You wouldn't understand it ef I did, but I'll tell yer this much. I come the double shuffle on that galoot. I've got him a prisoner over in Jersey, but he hain't got the money on him and I don't know how to make him give it up!"

Here was a startling revelation.

Young King Brady thought fast.

"It must be so," he said to himself. "For once the Governor is surely wrong. C. H. Rollingham and Harry Ryerson are one and the same."

"So you nabbed him?" he exclaimed, aloud. "How much did he get away with?"

"Yew'll be surprised when I tell you."

"If you want me to help you, then you must tell me all."

"Waal, it was twenty-five thousand dollars, but it did not all belong to me. I hev two partners in this bizness. They don't know I got him, though, an' I don't mean they shall know it till I get the money back."

"And why?"

"Oh, never you mind. Say, do you wanter take holt?"

"And try and make the fellow confess?"

"Yes. He sent me to that gal. He said she'd tell me whar the money was, but he lied. She jest jollied me along, and I believe they meant to do me up and rob me—upon my word I do."

"You may be perfectly sure that is what they did mean to do. Well, I'm willing to help you. If you will take me to that man I bet you he'll confess to me."

"Could you land him in jail, anyhow, without dragging me into it?"

"Yes, I can, if you are willing to make it worth my while."

"How much would you want, neow?"

"Well, I think it ought to be worth a hundred dollars, a job like that."

"Gee whiz! You charge high! Why, I was only going to give Old King Brady twenty dollars."

"Old King Brady is an old fakir. The chances are he would have arrested you."

"That's what I was afraid of. He might have caught on."

"To what?"

"Never you mind. And then that thar partner of hisn. A sassy young cub if ever there was one. I went to their office to-night to tell them as how I didn't want 'em, an' he commenced to guy me. I had a blamed good mind to plug him, so I had."

"He's a worse fakir than the old man. You have had a narrow escape."

"Blamed ef I don't think so, now I've talked with you. Waal, if you say the word it's a go. I'll give yer a hundred dollars ef you get that ar' money back and jail that feller. I don't care if you only keep him thar a week. That will give me time to do what I want."

"Which is what?"

"Oh, say, I'm not tellin' yer all my business, and if you are tew blamed inquisitive we'll cry quits right now."

"Oh, that's all right. I'm not at all inquisitive. Well, I'll take hold, Mr. Prouty, and keep you out if I can. Now where do we go?"

"May as well stop in this kerridge, I s'pose," replied the Joplin Jay. "Tell the feller to drive us to the ferry what takes you over to Jersey City, Pennsylvania."

"You mean the Pennsylvania ferry?"

"Yaas."

Harry gave Ben the order and settled down to more talk, well satisfied with his night's work thus far.

The only thing he regretted was not being able to let his chief know just what he had done.

CHAPTER VIII.

OLD KING BRADY LOSES HIS JAYS.

Leaving Young King Brady to jolly his jay, we must return to the old detective, whom we left in the office in the act of receiving the other two jays.

And this, it will be remembered, occurred on the evening following Harry's adventures with Bodd Prouty at the Tivoli.

All through the night and during that day Young King Brady had been among the missing, and it began to look as if Mr. Bodd Prouty, jay though he was, had been one too many for the young man.

Even Old King Brady was beginning to feel worried, notwithstanding his perfect confidence in his partner's ability to take care of himself.

Colonel Fishlake shook hands with Old King Brady as though he had been working a pump-handle.

"Glad to see you, Captain!" he exclaimed. "Lemme introduce my partner, Mr. Pete Butts."

Old King Brady expressed his joy at meeting Mr. Pete Butts, but it is doubtful if he told the truth, for his hand was nearly crushed in the iron grip of the Joplin Jay.

"Well, gentlemen, you are here," said Old King Brady, when the two "badmen" had seated themselves, "and now what's the news?"

"We are looking to yew for news, sir," replied Colonel Fishlake. "Yew have had all day to work in. Have you got our money back?"

"Why, not yet," replied Old King Brady, "but I have not been idle, and I think we may be able to do something to-night in the matter. It may not result in getting our hands on the money, but I am quite sure it will give us a clew to the man who robbed you, and that will be a good start."

Colonel Fishlake fidgeted in his chair.

"We want that money right away quick, Captain," he said. "Hain't that so, Pete?"

"That's so," growled Pete Butts, in a voice which seemed to come from the depths of his big boots.

"All in good time," said Old King Brady; "but where is your other friend?"

Colonel Fishlake looked disgusted.

"Say, neow, that ar's something we can't tell you," he replied. "Bodd seems to have given us the slip, and that's what's bothering us. We haven't seen him sence I seen yew. He come to this yere town and he seems to have stuck hyar.

Mebbe we shall have to hire you to help us look him up, blamed if I can understand whar he is."

"He wouldn't be the first stranger to get lost in New York, then. Did he have any money with him?"

"Gee whiz! That ar's whar the shoe pinches. He had it almost all."

"You mean almost all of the twenty-five thousand dollars which the greengoods men didn't get?"

"That's it."

"And he has been gone since when?"

"Sence yesterday morning."

"It looks bad."

"Blame bad. I begin to think as how Bodd has sloped."

"With the bag?"

"Yep!"

"That's so," growled Pete Butts, in the same sepulchral voice.

"Yew see," continued Fishlake, "it would give him his share clear and clean. We uns each chipped in sixteen thousand dollars an' some odd and come on here. Waal, we lost twenty-five thousand, and that was half the amount we made up. Ef Bodd has waltzed off with the other twenty-five yew see whar he stands."

"Nearly ten thousand to the good."

"Eggzackly."

"Would he do such a thing?"

"He would."

"That's so," growled Pete Butts.

"Well, we can only take up one thing at a time, gentlemen," said the old detective. "Now listen to me. I think I have located the place where the head of this band of swindlers holds out. What I propose is that we go there and tackle him; we will scare the life out of him and make him confess all. If he has got the money we will make him give it up. If he hasn't we will jail him and look for the man who has."

Colonel Fishlake looked doubtful.

"Say, thar hain't no danger of us getting into jail ourselves?" he growled.

"Oh, no! Not so long as you stick to me."

"I suppose it's against the law to buy them greengoods, as you call 'em?"

"You didn't buy any."

"That's so," growled Pete Butts, his solemn face never changing.

And then to make his assertion stronger, he repeated:

"That's so."

"And so you see you are perfectly safe," said Old King Brady. "All you have to do is to stick to me."

"Waal, it's a go."

"All right. We will start at once and let us hope that we may meet with success."

Old King Brady had given the matter very careful thought.

He had determined to close in on "Colonel Yellowlee" and to let the two Joplin Jays assist him in the job.

As for the threats made by the mysterious man behind the screen, they did not weigh with him one atom.

The bold and unusual method taken by the greengoods men to recover their missing companion now seemed more likely to have been prompted by an opium-crazed brain than anything else, to the mind of the old detective, and he expected to make a comparatively easy capture.

In any event he was willing to take his chances, no matter how affairs might turn.

So Old King Brady took his two jays uptown.

He walked them up the Bowery and showed them Chinatown and other notorious places, to their great delight.

At ten o'clock, he turned up in Twenty-seventh street with them.

He had now fully instructed the men in the part he expected them to play, and he felt that he could trust them to back him up in the moment of emergency.

They slipped into the building and ascended to the top floor as quietly as possible, halting before Artist Isham's door.

Here Old King Brady listened, but he could not hear a sound within the room.

He next peered through the keyhole.

There was no key in the lock and the detective perceived a light burning dimly inside.

"Gentlemen, the room is vacant," he whispered, "but I have an idea I shall be able to get our man, just the same."

"All right. We are with you, old man," said Colonel Fishlake.

And Pete Butts growled out as usual:

"That's so."

Old King Brady now produced his skeleton keys, and in a moment had opened the studio door.

As he supposed, it was the room into which he had been taken blindfolded that night.

Everything was the same except that the screen had been shifted to another part of the room, where it partially concealed a door.

One glance at this door was sufficient to show the old detective that his theory was correct. It opened into the adjoining house through a passage cut in the wall.

Old King Brady shut the outer door and locked it.

He then took the screen and placed it in its original position.

"Gentlemen, take your places behind this screen," he said, "and remain there till I give the word, then jump on your man, or men, in the way I have directed. Be careful, now, and make no bad break."

Old King Brady then crept up to the other door and pressed his eye to a peephole in the panel, which he had been quick to discern.

He now found himself looking through into another room.

It was just as he had supposed, although the old detective had not expected to have the discovery come so easy.

There in the room beyond, lying upon cushions thrown on the floor, were four men half undressed.

They formed a circle, each having his head resting on the breast of the man next to him.

In their midst, upon the floor, was an opium lamp, and one of the men was just removing the opium from it.

He dropped his head upon the breast of his companion and took two long, steady draws from the pipe, then passing it to his neighbor, who did the same, passing the pipe on to the next man.

"A joint, as I knew," thought Old King Brady, pulling away. "They are safe for awhile, and when the dope begins to work will be the time to tackle them."

He cautiously examined the fastening of the door, finding it locked on the inside.

"Never mind. I can draw them in here," he thought. "Now that I have recognized Jack Daggett, I think I know how to work that."

It was a fact:

In the man who had been preparing the opium pill the old detective had recognized that notorious greengoods operator.

It looked as if all was going to work out to a successful finish, and we need scarcely say that Old King Brady's arrangements had been very carefully made.

The only thing he had to regret was that Bodd Prouty was not with the other jays.

The old detective now began a hurried examination of the room after explaining to Colonel Fishlake how the land lay.

He opened every drawer, looked behind every picture and turned up the mattresses in the bed.

Here he found what he was searching for.

It was a bunch of hektograph greengoods circulars and a list of names covering several states in the South and Southwest.

Taking one of the circulars he carried it behind the screen and showed it to Colonel Fishlake.

"Is that the thing you received?" he asked.

"It is," replied the colonel, in a sepulchral whisper.

And Pete Butts added:

"That's so!"

Old King Brady pocketed as much of the outfit as he wanted and then returned to the peephole at the inner door.

The opium lamp was burning low now and the smokers all seemed sound asleep.

Old King Brady put his mouth to the peephole and called:

"Jack! Oh, Jack! In here, quick! The cops are going to pull the joint!"

It was no go the first time, nor the second, nor the third; but at the fourth call Jack Daggett raised his head.

"Who is calling me?" he exclaimed, in a husky voice.

"It's me—Harry—Harry Ryerson!" called Old King Brady, in reply.

The opium fiend staggered to his feet and looked wildly about.

Old King Brady was watching to see if he would arouse his companions, but he did not.

"Come, Jack! Quick!" called the detective, and he could hear the man staggering toward the door.

In a second a key was fitted to the lock and the door was thrown back.

There stood the detective and the two jays with revolvers leveled, and if the latter had kept their mouths shut it would have been an easy capture, but both broke loose with the old Missouri yell, at the same time discharging their revolvers and sending a couple of shots through the open door over Jack Daggett's head.

"Stop that!" shouted Old King Brady. "Jack Daggett, you are my prisoner!"

He leaped upon his man, jammed him against the wall and in an instant had the handcuffs on.

"After the others!" he shouted, paying no heed to the language of his prisoner.

The jays darted through the door, but they were too late.

Aroused by the uproar, the three opium fiends sprang to their feet and fled through a door in the other room, which they locked behind them.

"Too late!" cried Old King Brady, as he grasped the situation, "but it makes no odds. We have captured 'Colonel Yellowlee,' and now we are off."

"You're a liar! I'm not the man!" snarled Daggett. "Burn you, Brady! I'll lay you low for this!"

"A threatened man lives long," retorted the old detective. "Gentlemen, open the door and lead the way downstairs. I will follow with our prisoner."

Old King Brady, clutching the arm of the greengoods men, led him downstairs in the wake of the Joplin Jays.

"And now, brothers, for your surprise," thought the old detective.

It had all been most beautifully planned, but the best of plans will sometimes go the wrong way.

Already the police had nabbed the fleeing opium fiends and were now pulling the joint next door.

Two officers waited at the door of the studio building.

There should have been four, for Old King Brady had so arranged.

The instant Colonel Fishlake and Pete Butts stepped upon the sidewalk the officers clapped hands upon them.

"You are under arrest," was hardly uttered when the policemen found themselves sprawling on the sidewalk and had their chance to listen to that old Missouri yell.

Bang! Bang!

Both "badmen" fired on the instant at the sprawling cops.

Perhaps they did not intend to hit them.

At all events there was no damage done.

Hampered by his own prisoner, Old King Brady could do nothing, and before help came the Joplin Jays had rounded the corner on the full run and disappeared.

CHAPTER IX.

YOUNG KING BRADY FINDS HIS MAN.

It was thus that the two jays turned the tables on Old King Brady.

Perhaps there was a grim justice about it, too, for Old King Brady certainly meant to turn the tables on them and put them under arrest.

From Jack Daggett nothing of any bearing on the case could be learned at the police station, and the two jays were not in at that examination, for they were successful in making their escape.

The greengoods man admitted that he was the person who had interviewed Old King Brady over the screen.

He added that "Harry Ryerson" was his half-brother, and that he was greatly worried over his disappearance.

This was as far as Old King Brady got in the way of new information that night.

So the old detective went home to find Harry still absent, the cause of which we must now explain.

Young King Brady and Bodd Prouty left the cab at the Cortlandt street ferry and crossed to Jersey City.

Here they took an Ocean avenue trolley car to Claremont avenue and walked down the hill toward the little station.

Bodd Prouty had kept up a continual growl all the way from the ferry.

One moment he was claiming that Young King Brady's charge was too high and tried to beat him down.

Next moment he was doubtful whether it was going to pay him to muss with detectives at all, and he thought Harry better give it up and go home.

Then he was seized with the idea that there was no hurry. He'd think it over. Probably if he kept his man on starvation diet for a day or two he would come to his senses.

And so it went.

One thing was apparent.

Bodd Prouty regretted his bargain and wanted to shake Harry and keep his secrets to himself.

And so it kept on till they left the car, when the jay suddenly changed his tune again.

"Come on!" he exclaimed. "We'll go it as we agreed on, anyhow, just for luck. I owe you a lot for what you done for me to-night, and I don't believe you will go back on me."

This came just at the time Harry had about made up his mind to give it all up and take to shadowing his man.

They walked on down Claremont avenue hill a short distance, and then Bodd Prouty suddenly shifted again.

"Oh, say!" he exclaimed, stopping short, "I've got to have a drink or I shan't sleep none to-night. I never thought of that. Come on, les' go back up on the avenue and have a good horn."

Harry tried to dissuade him, but it was no use.

Climbing the hill again, Budd Prouty steered for the

nearest "gin mill," where he turned down two huge drinks of whisky one on top of the other.

"Now just wait for me a minute while I wash my hands," he said. "I won't be long."

Harry caught on in an instant.

"Door to the street in there?" he asked the bartender, as the jay disappeared through the passage leading to the washroom.

"Yes," was the reply. "Where did you pick up that Rube?"

Harry did not even stop to answer, but slipped out of the saloon and peered around the corner.

Just as he supposed, there was Bodd Prouty legging it down the side street for all he was worth.

Twice he looked back, but Young King Brady was not in evidence.

Harry was still watching around the corner of the building.

"He'll take the cross street and get back to Claremont avenue," he thought.

And so it proved.

The instant the jay turned Harry ran up Ocean avenue, changing to his usual dress as he went.

He made such good time that he came to the cross street just as Prouty appeared.

Merely glancing at the man, Harry passed him and turned in at the gate of a house a little further down, stepping down into the area to let his man pass.

Prouty pushed by unsuspectingly, and then, with Harry at his heels, the real shadowing began.

We cannot describe it all. Enough to say that Young King Brady managed his work with consummate skill.

He followed his man to the railroad, up the tracks toward Communipaw, over into the lots to the east of the oil-yard and down almost to the bay shore, where he saw, Prouty suddenly vanish through the open doorway of an old brick ruin which had evidently been a small factory of some sort.

Fire had done its work here and the building was a roofless wreck.

Harry now had to face a more difficult problem, for to approach the place closely was risky, of course.

He stood beside a solitary tree for a long time waiting and watching.

Twenty minutes elapsed, but the man did not appear.

"He has turned in somewhere," thought Young King Brady. "I'll just skin around the place, see what it looks like and then go home."

He crept up to the ruin and peered in through the open door.

All was dark inside and Harry could not hear a sound.

He stood away and looked about him.

The spot was lonely enough to favor the commission of any crime.

Over the hill he could see the big oil works; the tanks were scattered all about the lot.

Beyond the iron works was the bay, with a long wharf

projecting out into the water, at which several lighters loaded with oil barrels were moored.

Looking in another direction Young King Brady could see the cottages of the workers in the oil refinery.

He stepped back into the building, intending to bring his little electric dark-lantern into play.

He got no such chance.

Instantly a giant figure stepped before him out of the shadows.

"Ah, you will play the spy, will you!" the man shouted, and down went Harry, struck senseless by a blow on the head which might have felled an ox.

It was Bodd Prouty, of course.

He drew his revolver and, planting his foot on Young King Brady, aimed the deadly weapon at his head.

But Prouty did not fire.

"It's the Young Brady," he muttered. "It's the same feller what was with me, too. I know him now. Waal, sence he's hyar let him do his spying to some purpose. Perhaps it's just as well, after all."

This Harry heard, for unconsciousness had lasted but for an instant.

Prouty seized him by the collar and dragged him through the darkness.

Resistance was useless.

As it was, he dragged him to the rear of the building, where he pulled up a trapdoor and dropped him down.

Harry fell about seven feet, dropping into soft mud.

"Now, then, you blasted detective, you would come, so stay thar till you have done what I told you, and then mebbe I'll let you go."

The man was drunk, his voice showed that; but this did not mend matters a bit.

As the trapdoor fell with a bang a voice from the darkness called out in despairing tones:

"Prouty! Prouty! Have mercy, let me out of here and it shall all be as you say!"

Chances are the Joplin Jay thought it was Harry calling, for he paid no heed and the trapdoor dropped as has been told.

"Who is there?" eried the voice then. "Who is it? Speak, for heaven's sake!"

"Wait a minute," gasped Harry. "I'm almost dead."

"Who are you? What did he mean by calling you a detective? Why are you here?"

There was someone groping his way toward him through the darkness.

Harry picked himself up and as he did so fell back against a stone wall.

"Wait! Wait!" he gasped. "You are C. H. Rollingham, I suppose?"

"That's me," replied the voice, more mildly, "but who are you?"

Harry had got at his lantern now and he flashed it upon the darkness.

He was in a good-sized vault walled up with stone on all sides.

Before him stood a man who presented a pitiable sight. His clothes had been almost torn off his body and were a mass of rags, although of expensive material.

His face was all cut and bruised. He staggered as he walked over the muddy floor.

"Well," said the man, "I've got company at last, it seems. Has that wretch laid you out as he did me?"

"He has given me a pretty good shaking down," replied Harry, faintly, at the same time mopping the blood from a wound on his forehead.

"It's nothing to what I got," said the man; "but how did you know me?"

"You are Mr. Rollingham, then?"

"I admit that I am."

"I am Young King Brady, one of the detectives you sent for."

"In the name of heaven how did you come to be here! I never sent for you. I don't know what you mean, but I know this much. I've been here for days and I'm almost dead. If you can't help me I'm a lost man, sure."

"How can I help you when I am in the same fix myself?"

Rollingham staggered forward and sat down heavily with his back to the wall.

"I'm here, so I may as well tackle him and work him for what he is worth," thought Harry, who was rapidly pulling himself together.

"Listen to me, Mr. Rollingham," he said. "We are both in the same boat and the Bradys were engaged to find you, so I am going to talk out plain."

"As plain as you like. Who engaged you?"

"Mr. Henry Wickham for one."

"Yes, of course."

"Your partner, the greengoods man, for another."

"Wha—what do you mean? Do you dare to insinuate—oh, if I had my strength left I—but go on."

"It isn't any sort of use to butt up against me," said Harry, quietly. "You got twenty-five thousand out of three jays from Joplin, and you know it, and you did it on the greengoods lay. Perhaps your real name may be Rollingham, but just the same you have done time under the name of Harry Ryerson, and—oh, you would, would you? Look out! I am not so helpless as I seem!"

Indeed he was not!

Harry had his revolver and the greengoods man found it within an inch of his nose when he sprang up and made a feint to seize him by the throat.

But there was nothing to it.

Besides the weakness due to starvation, the man had been beaten almost to death, and had not even a child's strength left now.

With a deep groan he drew back and dropped at Harry's feet in a dead faint.

Something had been accomplished at all events.

Young King Brady had found his man.

But what was it likely to amount to after all, for there he lay as good as dead.

CHAPTER X.

HARRY'S FORTUNATE ESCAPE.

In a few minutes Harry had him back to life again and tame enough in all conscience.

The man was completely broken down, and he listened to Young King Brady's story meekly.

"Now, then, if you have got anything to say, say it," added Harry at the close.

"Well, I have been thinking it over while you talked," said the greengoods man, "and I have made up my mind to tell you the whole business, providing you will promise not to arrest me or have me arrested if we ever do succeed in getting out of this."

"I can give no such promise," replied Harry, "but this much I will promise you. I won't arrest you on the call of these infernal jays from Joplin, that's sure. If you want my advice, I say give back the money if you have got it, as I suppose you have. Anyhow, whether you do that or not, I shall make no move against you on their account."

"That's all I ask," was the reply.

"Then ease your mind and tell the truth," said Harry.

This appeal won. Soon the greengoods man began to talk.

"It's like this, Brady," he said. "I own I am a crook. My real name is Charles H. Rollingham, and I have traveled under a dozen aliases. Harry Ryerson was the name I was sent up the river under. Old King Brady knew me then."

"That was ten years ago?"

"Yes; and I did five up the river. Then I went out West and fell in with Henry Wickham. We got in with his brother, who is now dead, and took hold of the old lead mine near Joplin, now known as the Wickham mine. I worked up the capital in Chicago and other places. Enough to say we got the property on its feet, and last year we opened up offices in New York.

"Tom Wickham died and left his big interest to his deaf and dumb son, with this man Prouty as guardian and executor of the will. You don't care for all these business details. It is enough to tell you that Prouty wants the control of the mine. The idiot thinks he is capable of running it. He is such a fool that he thinks he must buy all the stock in order to get control. What he did was to get this fellow Fishlake and another named Butts to chip in and they raised fifty thousand dollars which they offered us for property worth a million. You should have read the fool letters he wrote."

"Get down to date," said Harry. "What brought him here?"

"It was the annual election of the company. In some way he has persuaded the court out there to let him execute proxies for young Tom Wickham and he came on here to vote himself into office. It's a long story, that part of it, but that was the idea. Fishlake and Butts were to be voted

in, too. We knew they were coming weeks ago, and I undertook to prevent it in a way old enough to have grown whiskers."

"In other words, you set your half-brother, Jack Daggett, on these jays and put up the greengoods job."

"That's right. I disguised myself and met them. I meant to get their money from them, but I only got half; that I put in my bank in New York and it's there now."

"And you came again without disguise and met them at the Cortlandt street ferry on the Jersey side to talk about the proxies."

"I did, and there is where Prouty fooled me. He met me alone. He told me that he expected to have two hundred thousand dollars to work with and meant to make us a better offer for our stock than he had previously done by letter, but that he had been disappointed and was willing to turn the proxies over to me for twenty thousand dollars cash."

"And you, believing that he did not know you, started in to buy him out with his own money."

"That's it, or partially so. I should have had to give Jack Daggett some. You see, I hadn't reported to Jack; I was waiting till I got through the job. Well, I went to the ferry and we had several drinks together. Prouty told me that he was afraid of his partners, who blamed him for losing the money—he didn't say how he lost it—and that he had pulled away from them and was boarding down by the oilyards below Communipaw, and if I would go with him to his boarding-house he would sign the proxies over to me and then go with me to the office and get the money."

"And you, knowing that the jays had a reason for locating near Claremont station, were fooled by this and went with him."

"That's right, Brady. I was a fool, of course; fool is no name for it. As we were crossing the lots near an old burned factory he turned on me and laid me out to the queen's taste. That's the time I found he really did know me. When I came to my senses I found myself here."

Rollingham's story had made everything plain.

"I should have thought you would have given in when you found yourself in this fix," Harry remarked when the greengoods man brought his story to a close.

"Well, I hung out," was the reply. "Fact is, I have only seen him twice since. The first time I was stubborn and wouldn't talk. The second time I sent him on a wild goose chase to Bill French's wife—probably you know Bill—I thought Flossie would get him full and get the secret out of him and so tell my brother. Of course I was a fool about that, too."

The night wore on and Rollingham became decidedly delirious.

By morning he sank into a deep sleep, from which Young King Brady was unable to arouse him, and again Harry thought he was going to have a dead man on his hands.

And during all these hours and others which followed Bodd Prouty never came near them.

The worst came about six o'clock the next evening, when Rollingham at last awoke raving mad.

He yelled and screamed, and seemed to think the cellar full of fiends.

It was all plain to Harry now.

The man was an opium fiend.

Doubtless he had morphine pills with him and had been dosing himself right along until now in his waking moments he was mad.

And this was proved.

Harry saw him take his dose later.

At last sleep came again to quiet his ravings and Young King Brady was able to breathe freely once more.

It was now nearly eleven o'clock at night, and Harry for the hundredth time renewed his examination of the walls of their prison.

It seemed all to no purpose, and Young King Brady was ready to give up in despair when his eye rested upon the only opening there was to that wretched hole outside of the trapdoor.

The opening was merely a bit of sewer-pipe set in the wall intended to carry any water off.

Again and again Young King Brady had examined it, but now something seemed to tell him that his only hope lay in that pipe.

"What is behind it?" Harry asked himself. "If this factory is really as old as it seemed to me to be it isn't likely that the drain behind that opening is piped all the way down to the bay. Much more likely it is a blind ditch, such as they used to build in old times, and it might be a regular sewer big enough for a fellow to crawl through."

Harry went over to the pipe, kneeled down and pulled at it.

Sure enough the thing was loose, and as he pulled it grew larger, the mortar in which it was set crumbling around it.

Suddenly it came out with a rush, and Harry fell over backward just in time to save himself from a broken leg, for two big stones came tumbling down out of the wall above.

He sprang up and flashed his dark-lantern into the hole.

"Great heavens! Here's hope!" exclaimed Young King Brady. "It is just as I supposed."

As he flashed his lantern into the break he found himself looking into the mouth of a sewer some four feet wide and three feet high.

The bottom was a little muddy, but there was no accumulation in it.

Young King Brady now felt that his chance had come.

He could do nothing with Rollingham: his first idea being, of course, that the man must accompany him.

Again and again he shook him and called his name, but could get no response.

Harry even listened for his heartbeats and felt the pulse. He could find neither.

"Upon my word, I believe he is dead!" he thought.

"Well, I can do nothing for him and I must make the try alone."

He buttoned his coat tight around him and crawled into the hole, throwing the light of his dark-lantern ahead as he went.

To describe that dreadful journey is needless.

It was all one thing, a crawl for several hundred yards through the mud.

At last he could see no further. A wall of mud rose before him, cutting off further advance.

"This is the end of the sewer," he told himself. "The mouth is blocked up, that's all."

He pushed away at it, but could not make much headway until all at once the whole mass of stuff went flying out.

And Young King Brady, looking through the hole thus formed, saw that the hour of his deliverance had come.

The sewer opened at the top of a low bank, down which the accumulated rubbish had rolled, and at the foot of the bank was a stretch of beach washed by the waters of New York Bay.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BRADYS CAPTURED.

Old King Brady was just getting into bed when he heard Harry's step on the stairs.

The old detective sprang to the door and threw it open.

"Come in! Come in!" he cried. "Where on earth have you been?"

And then when Harry entered:

"Why, you look as though you had been rolling in the mud!"

Harry was indeed a sight.

His clothes were plastered with mud from his head to his heels.

He dropped into a chair with every show of intense fatigue.

"What in the world has happened to you, Harry?" demanded the old detective, kindly. "Don't talk now if you are too tired. Put it off till morning and go to bed."

"Bed!" replied Harry. "What I want is grub. I haven't had a bite to eat since I saw you last."

Here was a revelation!

Old King Brady hustled on his clothes and went to work.

He made Harry undress and go to bed, and then with his own hands he prepared such food as seemed best for his partner and personally served it to him in bed.

It was during the meal and afterward that Old King Brady got the story.

"And you think Rollingham was actually dead when you left?" he demanded at its end.

"I am sure of it; I was so sure that I did nothing about him after I got out of the sewer, but just come home as best I could."

"He will be a small loss to the community," replied the old detective. "All the same we ought to get him out of there at once."

"It is for you to say. If you are willing to trust my diagnosis of the case, then there is no haste."

"I think I will telephone to the Jersey City police and tell them to go there and get the fellow out of the vault, but without mentioning our Joplin Jays," replied Old King Brady, after a moment's thought.

Harry assented, and the old detective went downstairs to attend to the matter.

"The Jersey City patrol wagon will start in five minutes," he announced, when he returned to the room.

Old King Brady then told all about his own adventures with Colonel Fishlake and Pete Butts.

"Those Joplin Jays have been a bit too many for us, Governor," declared Harry. "There is only one thing for us to do now, and that is to gather them in if they will only continue to hang out around the oil works until we get time."

"To-morrow morning early will be the time," replied Old King Brady, quietly, "but you don't go. You will stop right there in bed."

"Indeed I won't! Just as though I would miss my chance to be in at the finish! Give me an hour's sleep and I'll be ready for you. That's all I want."

Harry was as good as his word, and the next morning before most people in New York were out of their beds the detectives were on their way to Communipaw.

They went by the New Jersey Central railroad and walked across lots toward the ruined factory.

The only pause made on the way down from the house was to telephone police headquarters at Jersey City.

The answer received was what both had expected—Rollingham had been taken out of the vault dead.

The sergeant who answered the call asked who the man was and what was to be done with the remains.

Old King Brady's answer was that he was a notorious greengoods operator, and the remains were to be cared for at the morgue until he called.

Thus he left the police in ignorance of the true state of the case.

The intention of the old detective was to first locate the Jays and then arrange to jump on them in a way which would at once be effective and final.

Against Fishlake and Butts he hardly saw his way clear to bring charges, but he had no intention of permitting Bodd Prouty to escape the penalty of his crime.

"It is a bit strange that they should stop here around these oil tanks," remarked Harry, as they walked on over the lots. "One would have supposed they would pull out and go to some hotel in Jersey City."

"I don't believe Fishlake and Butts have much money," was the reply. "As for Prouty, he has not been with his partners for several days, as I told you. He is the real badman of the bunch and the one we want."

"There's your factory," said Harry, pointing.

"Yes. That's Benoit's old acid works. It burned down years ago."

"I wish it had been burned down flat before I got caught in it then. What time have you got?"

"It isn't quite seven."

"There seems to be quite a crowd of men down by the wharf under the hill. I wonder what they are about?"

"Give it up, unless they are about to go to work. Probably they are the employes of the oilyard and the lightermen."

"Likely. Let's be cautious now, Governor. It is just possible our jay may be inside there."

"Not likely. I just want to have a look at your prison first and then we will make a scouring of the neighborhood, and it will go hard if we don't succeed in learning where the jays hang out."

They were now close to the factory, and all at once they were startled by a loud clapping of hands and shouting inside.

"What in thunder!" muttered Old King Brady: "Why, the place seems to be full of men!"

They stole up to the nearest window and peered in.

There were upwards of twenty men inside.

They all stood huddled together around a man who was addressing them.

For a few minutes the detectives stood listening, hearing enough to tell them what it was all about.

"They are a bunch of oilmen and lightermen!" he whispered, as he pulled away from the window. "They are putting up a strike."

"That's what," replied Harry. "We had better slide out of here."

It would have been well if they had never come there.

Without being aware of it, the detectives had been seen by the pickets posted around the corners of the building by the intending strikers.

Now suddenly there came a rush behind them and half a dozen rough oil workers or lightermen—there were both among the bunch inside—pounced upon the detectives.

"Spies! Spies! Company spies!" they shouted.

They seized the Bradys and began to hustle them about roughly.

In a moment the strikers inside came pouring out and surrounded them.

"They are detectives!" shouted one big fellow who had seen Old King Brady's shield.

"Punch 'em!"

"Slug 'em!"

"Kill 'em!"

These and similar cries went up.

"Gentlemen!" cried Old King Brady, "you are making the biggest kind of a mistake. We have nothing to do with you or your business. Understand that?"

What were you rubbering in at the window for, then?" demanded one, who seemed to be a leader among them.

"Answer me that."

Just then, looking beyond the crowd, Old King Brady saw three men approaching.

"Those are the men we want to talk to!" he cried. "Our business is with them."

They were the three badmen from Missouri—the Joplin Jays.

"Why, them's my boarders!" cried the fellow. "Don't try to fool us, you old guy!"

The whistle at the oil works sounded then and many of the men started over the low hill, upon which stood an old-fashioned farmhouse.

Quite a number remained, however, and among them was the man who had done the talking to the detectives.

As Old King Brady learned later, it was only the lightermen who had struck and the strike happened the day previous.

The meeting was an informal affair, held in the early morning with the idea of persuading the yardmen at the oil refinery not to go to work that day.

Some did and some didn't.

Enough of a crowd remained to hold the Bradys where they were.

As the Missourians approached, the lightermen put it up to the detectives in pretty savage style.

It was a dangerous situation.

So remote was the spot that they could have killed them if they had taken a notion and there would have been no one to prevent.

"Keep your mouth shut, Harry!" Old King Brady whispered. "Let me do the talking. We will work out of this."

The three jays came striding forward.

There was a sneering smile on Bodd Prouty's face as they drew near.

"Why, good-morning, Mr. McIntyre," he called to the big lighterman who held Old King Brady. "What are you doing there?"

"Hello!" cried the lighterman. "You are here just in time. We were having our meeting, like I told you we were going to, and we caught these two mugs spying onto us. They are company detectives, I say, but they claim to know youse."

Bodd Prouty laughed outright.

Colonel Fishlake glared at Old King Brady.

Pete Butts never changed countenance.

He just bobbed his bullet-head and seemed to be waiting for a chance to chime in with his usual "that's so."

"Oh, yes, we know 'em!" cried Prouty. "Them's the Bradys, what robbed my partners last night over in New York, as we were tellin' you, McIntyre."

"Yer don't say!"

"That's who they be. We seen the crowd here and we recognized 'em. Turn 'em over to us and we'll fix 'em."

"It hain't none of my business," replied McIntyre. "Of course youse know yer own affairs, but when they come to spyin' on us, that's different. I've a good mind to punch the life out of 'em right now."

"What we want to do is to string 'em up by the thumbs

and give 'em a blame good licking, like we dew in Missouri," drawled Fishlake, "an' that ar' old barn of yours is jest the place to do the job in, friend Mac."

"That's what it is. Blamed if I don't like that idea!" cried the striker.

"It will give us all a chance!" cried another. "Let's do it, Mac!"

And so the cry went around.

Again Old King Brady tried to protest.

McIntyre struck him brutally in the mouth and Harry jumped in to defend his chief.

For a moment the detectives were roughly handled, and both lost their hats in the melee.

Colonel Fishlake persisted in his proposition, however.

It appeared that the big lighterman's house was at some little distance, and the question arose as to how to get the detectives there.

It was settled by catching an old plug of a horse which was feeding in the lots near by.

The Bradys were seated upon the beast, back to back, and securely tied by ropes, which one of the lightermen brought from the house on the hill.

Colonel Fishlake then took hold of the old bridle, which had also been brought from the house, and started to lead the horse across the lots, Pete Butts going on the other side, while Bodd Prouty, McIntyre and another, armed with sticks, kept jeering the Bradys and urging the old plug on.

It was an interesting procession.

Old King Brady and Harry, tied back to back, bare-headed upon the horse, led by the Joplin Jays and followed by a hooting mob of lightermen, while others from the oil-yard came over the hill.

But this did not continue for any great distance.

"Get back, you galoots!" ordered Bodd Prouty. "Mac and my friends will attend to this job. We'll make these blamed spies look sick."

McIntyre reiterated the order, and the lightermen, having other fish to fry, soon fell away, leaving the Bradys in the hands of their enemies, the Joplin Jays.

"Mac," said Bodd Prouty then, "looker yere, this is a great ketch for we uns, but you hain't in it, see?"

"Not in it?" replied the lighterman. "What do you mean?"

"You've been fooled."

"Who by? I don't understand."

"By yerself and yer friends. These here detectives weren't after yew uns. It's we uns they want."

"Is that so?"

"That's so!" piped up Pete Butts, seeing his chance.

"Course it's so," added Fishlake. "See here, Mac, sence we axed the privilege of camping out in that ar old house of yours hain't we been liberal with yew?"

"That's what you have, boss. The place is only an old wreck. I can't see what you want to stop there for, but I s'pose you know your own biz."

"It's jest that we want to be quiet and keep out of every-

body's way," said Prouty. "Ez we told you, we've been robbed. We wanted to do detective work against these yere detectives, and we knowed they'd be down hyar a-lookin' fer us, that's why. Brady, hain't that so?"

"So you say," replied Old King Brady.

"And so you want to leave them to us, Mac?" continued Colonel Fishlake. "We'll take care on 'em. Yew kin jest bet as how they won't trouble you uns no more."

"I'd jest like to get one good crack at 'em," growled McIntyre. "I had counted on that."

"Cut it out," said Bodd Prouty, who seemed to be catching New York expressions. "Here's a five-spot for you, Cap. Leave them to us, will yer now?"

It must have broken Bodd Prouty's heart to give up the five, but it did the work, just the same.

Now the last of the Bradys' tormentors fell away, leaving them to the tender mercies of the three jays.

Prouty turned on Harry at once.

"Whar's that man? Whatcher dew with him?" he demanded. "I'll fix yew for what you done last night! Whar's that man, I say!"

"Don't ask me," replied Harry. "I stayed in your parlor till I saw a chance to get out, and then you can just bet I went. The man was dead when I came away."

"Dead!" roared Prouty.

"I said it!"

"An' didn't he tell yer what he done with our money afore he died?"

"Maybe he did and maybe he didn't. You are not taking the very best sort of way to find out what I know."

"Hush! Don't talk to them while they hold us so," said Old King Brady. "Don't say a word."

"You hold your jaw!" cried Prouty. "Kun'l, is that ar' the man what started to turn you and Pete over to the police?"

"That's who he is," retorted Fishlake, "an' ef you had stuck by us, Bodd Prouty, and not turned traitor against us it wouldn't never have occurred."

Old King Brady began to see his way out.

He still had his revolver—no attempt to search them had been made.

"If we can only get them to fighting among themselves we may still be able to get in our fine work," the old detective said to himself.

They had now drawn near to an old wreck of a house standing in the lots somewhat below the Claremont station.

And here, as it proved, the Joplin Jays had taken up their headquarters, cooking for themselves over an old stove which remained in the kitchen and sleeping in their blankets.

"We'll land 'em in hyar and leave 'em tied up awhile," said Bodd Prouty. "We've got to get that ar' dough back, Tom Fishlake, if we expect to git our clutches onto the Wickham mine."

"Yew won't never git the mine, Bodd," retorted Fishlake. "Yew have been a fool yerself and yew've made a fool of us. I wisht now I'd never come."

And that Pete Butts guaranteed it came up from the bottom of his big boots with the usual:

"That's so!"

"What kick have yew got comin'?" cried Prouty, in a rage. "I reckon as how I paid all yer expenses. Never a blame cent did yew chip in, nor Pete, neither."

"And whar did you get the money?" retorted Fishlake. "Stole it from the Wickham estate!"

For the moment the Bradys thought there was going to be murder done.

Budd Prouty yanked out a bowie knife from some concealment, but before he could even raise it in the air Colonel Fishlake had his bowie ready for business, too.

"Oh, yew would, yould yew!" he hissed. "Come on! I'm good for yer, yew know it. Say, old Brady, he put up the job! He was going to make good with that ar' green money we didn't git! I hain't in it, neither is Pete. No, not none."

What Prouty said then we cannot reproduce.

But the fight did not come.

For several minutes the jays continued to "jaw" at each other, Pete Butts silently contemplating the wordy scrap.

Then they put up their bowie knives and released the Bradys from the horse, which they sent ambling away on three legs over the lots with a whack of Prouty's stick, which he had dropped when he drew his knife.

The Bradys, with their hands still tied behind them, were then led into the old house and tumbled over in one corner of the room.

It looked black for the detectives.

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

And now, greatly to the relief of the captured detectives, the Joplin Jays went outside and renewed their quarrel in the open.

Perhaps they wanted to be on the lookout for any of the lightermen who might be disposed to intrude on them.

At all events, they took up their station too far away for the Bradys to catch the words spoken, although their loud, boisterous tones could be heard through the open door.

"Governor, this is a perfectly ridiculous ending to our work!" said Harry. "One might expect this sort of thing out in the far West, but to fall down so before these jays makes me tired. It is perfectly absurd."

"You look at it the wrong way," replied Old King Brady. "If we were in Missouri where these fellows belong we should never think of calling them jays. We should just put them down for what they are, three desperately bad men and ready for any crime. The fault is mine, Harry, entirely mine."

"I don't see how you figure that out, then," Young King Brady replied.

"I should have thought that the jay side of this precious trio would prompt them to stay put in the place they had

chosen, while their desperate character was sure to render them more dangerous than we had supposed."

"Oh, I don't think you need blame yourself that way. If it hadn't been for those infernal strikers we might have closed in on them all right. How were we to guess that matters were going to take the turn they did?"

"There's something in that, too; but come, Harry, are you going to be able to do your old trick?"

"You mean to squeeze up my hands and get loose from these infernal cords?"

"Yes."

"Well, I don't know, Governor. I'm tied pretty tight."

"Try it."

"I'm trying now; but say, what are we fighting for, anyhow? One of the men who would have engaged us is dead, the other who did engage us is in jail. If we are working for anybody it must be the Joplin Jays themselves."

"We are fighting for the interests of a poor deaf and dumb boy away out in Joplin," replied Old King Brady. "I have carefully investigated and think I know all. If Rollingham was a scoundrel, then that man Wickham is a bigger one, and I mean to down him. I heard such good reports of the mine that I bought some of the stock myself."

Louder and louder grew the voices outside.

Now Colonel Fishlake's thunderous tones could be heard hurling choice expletives at Budd Prouty.

Again Prouty's picturesque replies were partially heard.

Occasionally Pete Butts chimed in: "That's so!"

"Quick, Harry, for heaven sake!" breathed the old detective. "How are you getting along there?"

"I have loosened them some, Governor, but not much. Patience a minute and perhaps I shall be able to get my hand through."

Harry has an unusually small hand, and he possesses the power of being able to compress it into still smaller compass.

Many a time has Young King Brady fooled those who have captured him and who believed him to be securely tied.

"I'm free!" he whispered a minute later.

"Careful! Don't disarrange the cords," said Old King Brady. "We want to jump on them suddenly when we do jump. Go slow."

Harry reached for his knife and severed the cord about the other hand.

Then he reached over and cut Old King Brady free.

"I'll lie as I am," said the old detective. "Get yourself back into position so as not to excite their suspicions in case they come in."

Suddenly the quarreling jays called off and all three came trooping into the hut.

Old King Brady now began to talk.

"Well, have you fellows settled your differences?" he demanded. "You have been making noise enough out there to settle the affairs of the world."

"Don't yew get fresh, old man," snarled Fishlake. "I'm hyar to settle with yew for the trick yew played on me last night."

"What trick did I play you? How did I know the police were going to be on hand when we came downstairs?"

"You knew blamed well. It was a put-up job."

"Never mind about it," said Old King Brady. "We came here to talk business with Bodd Prouty. We don't propose to interfere with you."

"Huh!" snarled Prouty. "Yew speak as though it was in your power to interfere with any of us, which it is not."

"I still have my tongue left, and I want to tell you that you are risking state's prison by what you did to my partner, and what you are doing to us both now."

"I'll take chances on that, old man. Now listen to me, both of you, and let whichever can come nearest to answering without lying make the talk. What's become of C. H. Rollingham, that's what I want to know?"

"He is dead, and you are his murderer," replied Old King Brady, calmly. "That's how the case stands."

"He may be dead, but whar's his body been took?"

"That doesn't concern you."

"Mebbe not. What consarns me the most is to know how to get back the money he stole from me. If yew kin help me in that I'll let up onto yew and pay yew well besides."

Old King Brady was watching Fishlake and Butts while this speech was being made.

The men never took their eyes away from Bodd Prouty, and on Colonel Fishlake's part, at least, the look which he bestowed upon him was one of fierce hate.

"Rollingham put the money in his bank in New York," said Harry. "He told me that while we were down there together in that hole."

"He did, eh?" snarled Prouty. "Waal, it has gotter come out again. Old man, how can it be arranged?"

"Through me," replied Old King Brady.

"Will you get it if I'll let you go?"

"I will, but——"

"No buts."

"But, I say, you will have to give up those proxies on the Wickham Lead Company's stock if you want me to do the work."

"What!" roared Prouty. "Give up! Why, hear him. Fishlake, Butts! Did you ketch onto that?"

"I did," growled the colonel, "but thar's suthin' else what yew've gotter give up, Bodd."

"What! What! You are at it again!"

"I am, and it's the money yew've got about yer!" roared Fishlake. "Pete an' me is gwine to shake yer, and we are gwinter—ha! Yew would, would yer. Take that!"

Suddenly Bodd Prouty yanked out his bowie knife again and made a slash at Fishlake's face.

The colonel nimbly dodged, and in a twinkling it was steel against steel.

The bowie knives were right in business now.

Quick as lightning the two detectives sprang to their feet.

"Up hands or you're dead ones! We've got the drop on you!" Old King Brady cried.

Pete Butts threw up his hands and darted out of the house.

"Burn you, Bodd! That's yourn!" roared Fishlake, burying his bowie in the "badmah's" breast.

With a deep groan Bodd Prouty sank to the floor, while the Bradys flung themselves upon Colonel Fishlake.

Fishlake fought like a maniac, but in an instant the Bradys had him overpowered, and the old detective slipped the handcuffs on.

As for Pete Butts, he had taken to his heels across lots, and from that moment the Bradys never saw him again.

Bodd Prouty breathed his last within two minutes.

The detectives made short work of his murderer.

They tied his legs together, gagged him to check his fearful tongue, and then Harry, leaving Old King Brady on guard, ran to the office of the oil works and telephoned for the patrol wagon.

Fishlake wound up in the Jersey City jail, while Prouty's remains were taken to the morgue.

Upon Prouty was found the proxies, but no cash of any account—three hundred, all told.

Upon Fishlake was found less than a dollar.

Evidently Bodd had lied about the money he brought East with him, even to his companions and the genial hand-shaker of the greengoods man got about all.

And that was stolen from the Thomas Wickham estate of Joplin.

Old King Brady proved that much and saw the money restored from Rollingham's estate.

It was the old detective who engaged competent counsel and fought for the rights of the deaf and dumb boy.

It was he also who showed up the crooked dealing of Henry Wickham, president of the lead mine, and had him removed.

Later that same deaf and dumb youth came in for a million, for Old King Brady never ceased his efforts until the mine was in competent hands.

Jack Daggett got five years and Colonel Fishlake went to the electric chair.

No attempt was made to capture Pete Butts.

And thus the case which begun almost as a farce ended in tragedy.

Connected with the great detectives' mining work there have been many peculiar cases, but certainly none more peculiar than that of The Bradys and the Joplin Jays.

THE END.

Read "THE BRADYS AND CAPTAIN KLONDIKE; OR, THE MAN FROM THE NORTH POLE," which will be the next number (334) of "Secret Service."

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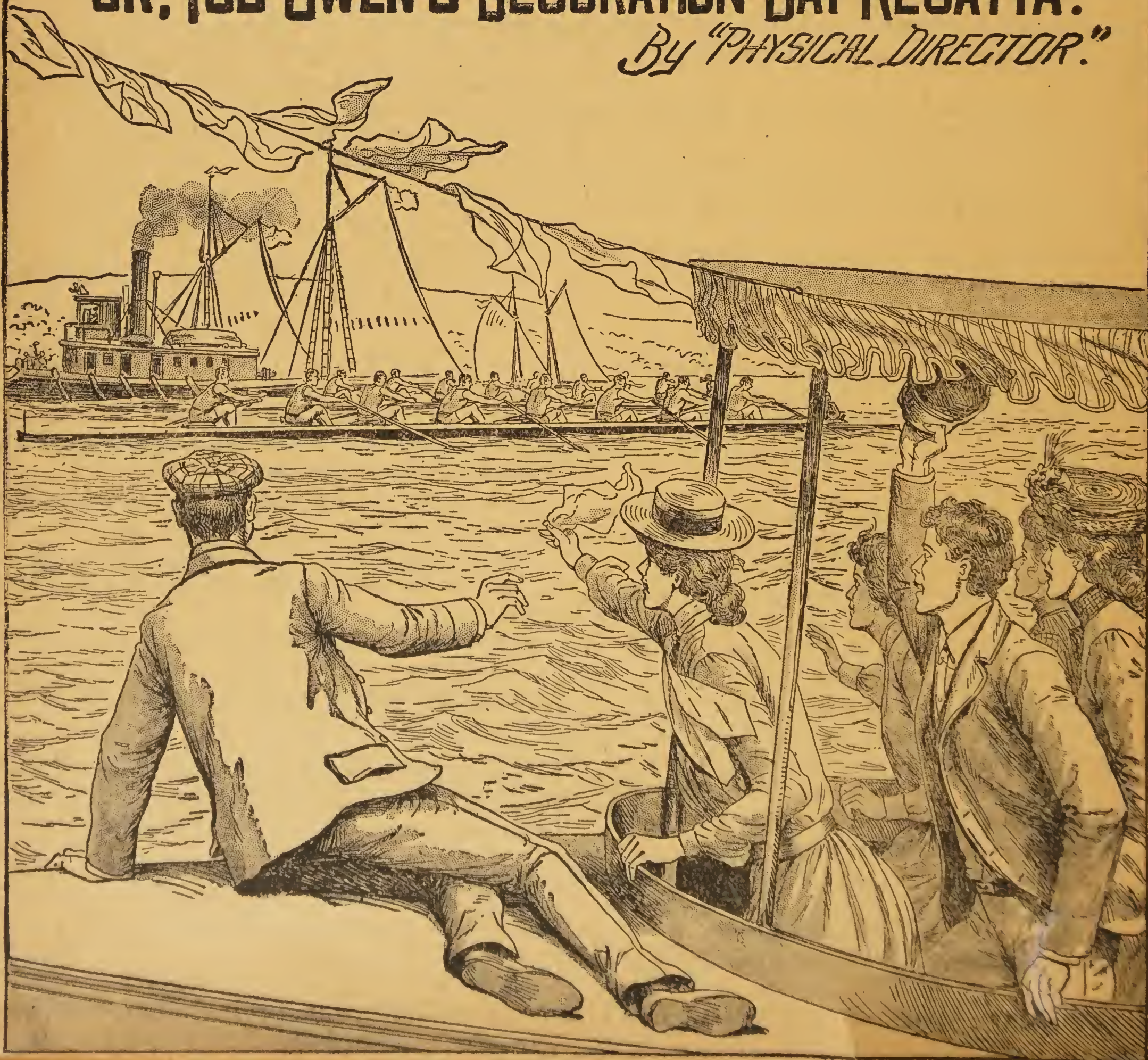
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